REASON
ROMANTICISM
AND
REVOLUTION

VOLUME ONE

M. N. ROY

RENAISSANCE PUBLISHERS LTD.
15, BANKIM CHATTERJI STREET, CALCUTTA-12.

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FIRST PUBLISHED : AUGUST 1952

PUBLISHED BY SIBNARAYAN RAY ON BEHALF OF RENAISSANCE PUBLISHERS LIMITED, 15 BANKIM CHATTERJI STREET, CALCUTTA 12.

PRINTED IN INDIA BY B. N. BOSE AT THE BOSE PRESS, 30 BROJO MITTER LANE, CAL.

PREFACE

THE cultural and moral crisis of modern civilisation is compelling sensitive and thoughtful men throughout the world to turn towards its humanist tradition. The movement for a humanist revival grows stronger every day. It is being increasingly realised that the baffling problems of our time call for a sober rationalist approach. The restoration of moral values in public life is the crying demand. There is no doubt about the sincerity of the agonised cry for a better and harmonious life on this earth. Yet, it seems to be a cry in the wilderness.

The cause of this distressing experience is the negative consequence of modern scepticism. The critical thought of the nineteenth century challenged the pretension of the rounded-up system of classical philosophy which claimed to have discovered ultimate truth in the light of " right reason." The rejection of *a priori* speculative philosophical system set human spirit free from the bondage of the venerable belief that the solution of all the problems of life could be deduced from abstract first principles. But at the same time, it sowed the seeds of the moral and cultural crisis of our time. The baby was thrown out with the bath-water. With the rejection of the metaphysical concept of " right reason ", rationalism became meaningless; it was replaced by all sorts of mystic urges, such as intuition, elan vital, entelechy, as the basic guiding principle of life. If empiricism deposed reason from the seat of the supreme judge, pragmatism subordinated moral values to practical considerations.

This book is an attempt to rescue rationalism and ethics from the devastating consequences of scepticism. In the light of modern "scientific knowledge, it is discovered that man's rationality is a biological property. Reason is not a metaphysical category. Moral values are placed on a firm

foundation when they are referred back to the innate rationality of man. They need no other sanction than conscience, which is not the voice of God, but results from rationality. The discovery of the physical basis of reason and the rationalist secular sanction of morality frees Humanism from the mystic connotation traditionally associated with it. The *a priori* systems of speculative philosophy belong to the past. But a comprehensive philosophy is indispensable to guide human life. A rationalist social philosophy must be deduced from a scientific interpretation of Humanism. On the basis of a humanist interpretation of cultural history, this work endeavours to outline a comprehensive philosophy which links up social and political practice with a scientific metaphysics of rationality and ethics.

DEHRADUN,
August 15th, 1952.

M. N. ROY

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PUBLISHERS NOTE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

HEGEL said that the history of philosophy was the history of the world. Having learned from him, Marx corrected the master and declared that the history of civilisation was the history of class struggle. A whole century has passed since these apparently contradictory doctrines of historiology were expounded. The contradiction is apparent, because both Hegel and Marx regarded history as an organic evolutionary process of becoming unfolded by its own dynamics. Because the contradiction is apparent, even now the controversy is not settled, dispassionate thinkers finding it difficult to choose one or the other view.

Michelet advanced yet another dynamic doctrine of historiology, a generation before Marx and independent of Hegel, which seemed to combine the two apparently conflicting views. Feeling dissatisfied with the conventional views of history, the would-be historian of the French Revolution searched for a new method of writing history as a science. He hit upon the idea that philology, the study of the origin of languages, might yield a clue to the secret of the past history of peoples. The philological approach to the problems of historiology led Michelet to the conclusion that history was mingled with philosophy. In the introduction to his projected, but never finished, *Universal History,* Michelet wrote in 1830: "With the world began a war, which will end only with the world: the war of man against nature, of spirit against matter, of liberty against fatality. History is nothing other than the record of this interminable struggle."

One hundred years before Michelet's effort to make a new science of history, an obscure teacher of Roman Law at

Naples, Giambattista Vico, had written a treatise on the *Principles of a New Science dealing with the Nature of Nations, through which are shown also New Principles of the Natural Law of Peoples.* Michelet discovered a kindred spirit in Vico—a pioneer who had blazed a new trail of historical research. The central theme of Vice's until then little known work is that humanity is its own creation. Insisting upon the method that the facts of known history must be referred back to their primitive origin, in order to be properly appreciated, Vico established what he called "this incontestable truth: the social world is certainly the work of man." The corollary to this incontestable truth was "that one can and should find its principles in the modifications of human intelligence itself".

Young Michelet writing "on the burning pavements of Paris", in the midst of the July Revolution of 1830, was struck by Vico's anthropological, philological and sociological approach to the problems of historical research. He was, as he himself declared, "seized by a frenzy caught from Vico, an incredible intoxication with his great historical principles". Michelet did not live long enough to write his *Universal History* to show how history and philosophy had been intertwined through the ages. But he had the occasion to proclaim that "all science is one: language, literature, history, physics, mathematics and philosophy; subjects which seem to be the most remote from one another are in reality connected, or rather they all form a single system".

So, the organic view of history is not the result of Marx putting his master on his feet. As a matter of fact, Marx and Engels had read Michelet, and Vico's ideas were also not unknown to them. On the other hand, the "new science" born at Naples had reached the German seats of learning through Leibniz, Wolff, Herder, Lessing, Goethe and other scholars and philosophers. Not only did Herder

know of Vico's work before he wrote his *Ideas Towards the Philosophy of the History of Mankind;* Vico's influence can be detected also in Hegel's philosophy of history.

Vico, in his turn, had read Francis Bacon's work. Unkind critics of the time thought that the *Scienza Nuova* was a plagiarism of *Novum Organum.* That was, of course, malicious; but it is a fact that Vico's work was cast on the pattern of Bacon's researches. It was from the latter that Vico admittedly got the idea of applying to the study of human history the inductive method which Bacon had recommended for the study of natural history. Grotius had made a philological study of history, of theology and philosophy, in order to discover the universal laws of nations. Having studied his works, Vico conceived of the possibility of applying similar methods for discovering the general laws of history. The dynamics of ideas can be traced all the way back to the great thinkers of the remotest antiquity.

Tracing the chain of thought in modern times, one finds Savigny recognising a similarity between Vico's doctrine of historical jurisprudence and his own. The preface to Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history published in 1837 mentions Vico as one of the three, the other two being Herder and Schlegel, who had treated the subject previously. The first German translation of Vico's *Universal Law,* published in 1884, carried an introduction which pointed out the similarity of Hegel's ideas with the doctrines of the Italian historian expounded more than a hundred years before. Moreover, it is quite possible that Hegel felt Vico's influence through the intermediary of Rousseau, who was at Venice when the finalised version of *Scienza Nuova* was published there. Judging from his *Essay on the Origin of Languages,* one can assume that Rousseau had picked up from Vico the idea of the philological approach as the clue to the problems of the origin of society.

"Marx and Engels seem to have taken from Vico, perhaps in the first place through Michefet, but later at first hand, the formula that' men make their own history', from which their Historical Materialism was developed.....

Historical Materialism, in this sense, went beyond anything, directly asserted by Vico, but as it seemed to his Marxist interpreters, in a direction in which he himself had gone a long way."[1]

Labriola was the first to give a systematic shape to the Marxian materialist conception of history. In his essays on the subject, he recognises Vico as the forerunner of Marx. Later on, Paul Lafargue more explicitly showed that the Marxist view of history could be traced back to Vico through Lewis Morgan. Early in his intellectual career, Marx himself had read Vico. In 1861, he. expressed surprise at Lassalle's not having read *Scienza Nuova,* and admired "its philosophic conception of the spirit of the Roman Law". In a footnote to *Capital,* Vico is actually mentioned as having said that "the essence of the distinction between human history and natural history is that the former is made by man and the latter is not". An exhaustive study of the works of Vico led Sorel to the conclusion that "Vice's ideogenetic laws anticipated the Marxist doctrine that ideas are functions of the mode of production". Finally, Croce has revealed the Vicoean ancestry of Marxism: "Marx and Sorel have brought to maturity Vico's idea of the struggle of classes and the rejuvenation of society by a return to a primitive state of mind and new barbarism".[2]

There is an unbroken chain of the evolution of ideas which refuses to conform either with the Hegelian doctrines of development through conflicts or the Marxist dogma of

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[1] Introduction to the *Autobiography of Giambattista Vico;* Translated by Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin; Cornell University Press, 1944.

[2] Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico.*

economic determinism, although it does corroborate Hegel's philosophy of history rather than that of Marx. Vico learned from Bacon and Hobbes, but expounded his new science of history as a critic of the doctrine of Natural Law. On the other hand, he can hardly be called an ideologist of the proletarian revolution. He was a Catholic. "Humanity is its own creation; but God alone is great;"—Vico could not get away from such self-contradictory notions. Yet, he did anticipate the Marxist interpretation of history, which is explicitly anti-religious and atheistic.

Materialism is the essence of the Marxist system. But it did not originate with Marx. It is as old as human thought. The rationalism of the primitive man subordinated him to the gods. Philosophy was born of the earliest revolt against that original fall of man. Ever since then, it has had a dynamics of its own.

In the last analysis, history is the record of man's struggle for freedom. Social evolution is a continuation of the biological evolution taking place on a higher level, where the struggle for existence, to be more effective, becomes co-operative and collective. That is why history is an organic evolutionary process.

Aristotle was the first to conceive history as a rational evolutionary process. The organic conception of history was taken over by the Stoics, who dominated European thought until it came under the influence of Christian theology as expounded by St. Augustin. After a whole millennium of scholasticism, the rationalist view of human progress was revived by the men of the Renaissance. That was a demonstration of rationalism and romanticism being two parallel currents of thought which intermingled themselves to make history. The romanticists of the Renaissance themselves argued that "it was absurd to regard the whole period from Constantin to Columbus as a mere empty chasm separating

two kindred ages of Enlightenment; on the contrary, it was necessary to perceive beneath the surface of things one continuous process slowly working itself out in this and every age."[3]

Historically speaking, there were two Aristotles: the author of *Metaphysic* and *Logic,* claimed as the philosophical authority of mediaeval Christian theology; and the author of *Politics* and *Ethics.* The latter was completely forgotten until the Arabs resurrected him and introduced him to Europe, to be taken over by the Renaissance Humanists. The evolutionary view of human progress was thereafter elaborated by a gallaxy of luminaries in the firmament of the world of thought. Finally, Hegel shaped it as the key to world history or the history of civilisation. "He saw the whole process of the political development of the human race as a gradual realisation of the idea of freedom."[4] That evidently is the common ground for Hegel's Idealism and Marxian Materialism. Any hiatus in the evolution of thought since the dawn of civilisation is only imagined by those who claim to have sucked out of their thumbs a whole philosophy of the future which has no past. The history of thought is the key to the history of civilisation, because it can be logically reconstructed.

To keep some sort of record of the past in the form o£ legends and mythology has been a common practice with all ancient peoples. But the writing of history did not begin until the Greeks, with their remarkable rational and secular approach to every problem of human existence, appeared on the scene of antiquity. The progressively triumphant, agelong struggle for the spiritual emancipation of man began when in 585 B.C. an eclipse took place according to the prediction of Thales. That epoch-making experience suggested

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[3] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *The Science of History.*

[4] Ibid.

to the bold Ionian thinkers the idea that physical phenomena were not brought about by the caprice of countless gods. With the awakening of an insatiable curiosity, they began to enquire into everything, including the past of the human race. The Hegelian view that philosophy is the clue to history, that "history is philosophy teaching by example" (Bolingbroke), originated with Thucydides, and was expounded almost in its modern form by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century B.C. Philosophy having inspired the writing of history, its history, logically as well as empirically, provided the motive force of the history of civilisation, which is, as Michelet said, "the story of man's struggle against nature, the war of liberty against fatality."

During the thousand years when the secular spirit of enquiry was overwhelmed by the Christian faith, history naturally became a handmaid of theology. But that also was a blessing in disguise. Patristic historiography was the creator of the science of history. The history of man, from his fall in the Garden of Eden to his redemption, could not be imagined except as an evolutionary process, a causal chain of events. Even the dogma of predestination is essentially a rational concept. After the miracle of creation, nothing comes out of nothing; every step in man's life, towards salvation or redemption, is caused—indeed, by the will of God, but nonetheless caused. That is a rational view, which Patristic historians had to develop in order to fortify the position of the Catholic Church. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, written early in the fourth century, was the first attempt to write a history of human society, since the ancient Greeks. St. Augustin's *Civitas Dei,* written a century later, was a landmark in world literature, not because of the effort to rationalise the Nicean creed, but because inspite of itself it was the first essay in the philosophy of history.

Matter is indestructible; so are ideas. Thousand years of almost impenetrable darkness could not extinguish the fire of the spirit of enquiry kindled by the founders of science and philosophy. Disowned by Christian Europe, the inspiring tradition of man's early struggle against nature was treasured by the infidel Arabs, who eventually passed it on to the natural heirs, so to say. Learning from the Greek masters, particularly Aristotle, a succession of Arab scholars from the tenth century onwards, occupied themselves with the science of history. The culmination was Ibn Khaldun's *Universal History,* written at the close of the fourteenth century. It was such a profound treatise on the philosophy of history that Ibn Khaldun has been called "the founder of the science of history".[5] The Arabic culture, inspired by the secular and rational spirit of the ancient Greek philosophers, reached Europe through the Universities of Spain and Italy. Its contribution to the European Renaissance was incalculable. With the humanist revival of secularised history, a cycle of the dynamics of ideas was completed. Embodying the precious heritage of the past, stretching out to the remotest antiquity, Vico indicated the future development. The philosophy of history;and the history of philosophy mingled in his work. Therefore Vico was hailed by Michelet as his master, and Michelet harmonised the apparently contradictory Hegelian and Marxian views of history.

Vico spoke of "two histories—of languages and of things". By things he evidently meant human acts—social and political. If events were given a wider connotation, history would have to include at least geology. Vico suggested that philology should be considered as a part of history. That was a great idea, which revealed the intimate connection between history and philosophy. Because, philo-

[5] Robert Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History.*

logy is also a part of philosophy. The earlier stages of the history of philosophy merge into the history of language. The method of the science of history is criticism, as observation and experiment are the methods of the physical sciences. The past is to be studied for a rational explanation of the present. The discovery of a rational connection between the past and the present of the human race shows off history as an evolutionary process. Consequently, it becomes possible to deduce some general laws governing historical events.

But the past is not there for the historian to study. There are only records. They are of two kinds—physical (implements, ruins of buildings, relics of art and crafts, etc.) and written documents, which can be called mental or spiritual records. The latter are of the primary importance, because only with their help can the significance of the physical records be fully appreciated. Philology is the instrument for reconstructing a universal history of the past on the basis of a criticism of written records. History of languages thus is a part of the science of history. On the other hand, words originate in course of the process of biological evolution to serve as vehicles for the expression and communication of primitive emotions and ideas. Languages develop to serve the purpose of coordinating disjointed ideas and emotions. So, the history of languages is the early history of the evolution of thought—the history of primitive philosophy. Since without the aid of philology no history could be written, to that extent, Hegel was right in saying that the history of philosophy was the history of civilisation. Most probably, he got the idea from Vico's doctrine of two histories. The fact, however, is that by a critical study of the records of the past, history discovers the hidden springs of human action. So, the past can be reconstructed more accurately as the history of thought. If Hegel's dictum is stated in Croce's words—"all true historians are willy-nilly

philosophers"—then it can be appreciated as containing the generally acceptable truth about history.

The materialist conception of history, to identify the history of civilisation with the history of class struggle, loses all sense if intelligence is accorded no place in the process of social evolution. In that case, Marxism as a philosophy of action will have no leg to stand on, and revolutions will be impossible. They are historically necessary, but they are also made by men moved by the idea of revolution. However, it is palpably absurd to regard history as a succession of events brought about by the automatic development of the means of production. The man cannot be eliminated from the evolutionary process of history. Social forces are not meta-physical categories; they are the collective expression of the creativeness of man, and the creative man is always a thinking man.

Economic determinism in social evolution and cultural history does not necessarily follow from Materialism. The one is a philosophy, while the other is only a method of interpreting history. Philosophically, Materialism must concede objective reality to ideas. It can claim absoluteness only in epistemology. History, particularly cultural history, is also ideologically determined. Therefore, it is an error to conceive Historical Determinism as purely economic. History is determined, but there are more than one determining factor. Moreover, Determinism is a logical concept. It is inherent in a determined process; no extraneous factor intervenes; because, in that case, the process becomes dualistic, while Monism is inherent in the logical concept of Determinism. Materialism is the only logically perfect philosophy, because it alone makes Monism possible. Therefore, Determinism is inherent in Materialism. But economic Determinism, being a dualist concept, cannot be necessarily related to Materialism.

Philosophically, the materialist conception of history must recognise the creative role of intelligence. Materialism cannot deny the objective reality of ideas. They are not *sui generis;* they are biologically determined; priority belongs to the physical being, to matter, if the old-fashioned term may still be used. But once the biologically determined process of ideation is complete, ideas are formed, they continue to have an autonomous existence, an evolutionary process of their own, which runs parallel to the physical process of social evolution. The two parallel processes, ideal and physical, compose history. Both are determined by their respective logic or dynamics or dialectics. At the same time, they are mutually influenced, the one by the other. That is how history becomes an organic process. If the present can be convincingly explained by a more rational understanding of the past, then it will be evident that only a synthesis of Idealism and Materialism, more correctly speaking, a dispassionate and comprehensive appreciation of the entire heritage of human thought, can be the only philosophy of the future. Such a non-partisan philosophy will throw a flood of light on the thick gloom which to-day hangs on the horizon, and blaze new trails for humanity, out of the present impasse.

To put the proposition more precisely, what is needed is a restatement of Materialism so as to recognise explicitly the decisive importance of the dynamics of ideas in all the processes of human evolution—historical, social, political and cultural. Epistemologically, Idealism stands rejected. The old problem of perception, which baffled philosophy for ages, has been solved by modern Materialism with the aid of the latest knowledge of physiology. The gulf between physics and psychology thus is no longer unbridgeable, A bridge is thrown across by merging psychology into physiology. All components of the most highly developed

organism can be reduced to carbon compounds which are physico-chemical substances. Vitalism cannot introduce a mysterious metaphysical factor, such as Bergson's *elan vital* or Driesch's entelechy, into the process of biological evolution, without leaving the ground of experimental science. In so far as Idealism takes philosophy beyond the radius of experience, and invokes super-sensual categories, it is hardly distinguishable from religion. As such, it is of no use for man in the quest for freedom. It is long since Plato's Uni-versals have been relegated to the realm of poetry. Honest and consistent idealist philosophy has had little to add to the ancient Sage. Modern Idealism since Descartes could never get out of the vicious circle of dualism, which stulti-fies philosophy because it leads to religion. Notwithstanding his transcendentalism, Kant was more of a materialist than usually perceived. The monist Idealism of Spinoza and Hegel was inverted Materialism.

In so far as it claims nothing more than that ideas have an independent history of their own, that the history of philosophy is the master-key to the problem of reconstructing the history of the race, from the dawn of civilisation, Idealism flows into Materialism, the two together providing a comprehensive explanation of the past and present, and a rational guide for mankind exploring the still unknown depths of the future.

"Quick transitions to new types of civilisation are only possible when thought has run ahead of realisation. The vigour of the race then pushes forward into the adventure of imagination. The world dreams of things to come, then, in due season, arouses itself to their realisation. Given the vigour of adventure, sooner or later, the leap of imagination reaches beyond the safe limits of the epoch, and beyond the sale limits of the learned rules of taste. It then produces

the dislocation and confusion marking the advent of new ideals for civilised efforts."[6]

No sensible materialist would find any difficulty in sharing this view of a front rank idealist philosopher of our time. There is no other way to explain how great revolutions take place in history. History is made more by the brain of man than by his brawn. Without recognising ideas as the driving force of history, the materialist conception of history becomes a very superficial doctrine, and historical determinism a fallacious proposition. The view that social evolution and even cultural history are determined entirely by the operation of economic forces cannot be logically deduced from Materialism nor can it be empirically verified. Even in the narrow sense of a social philosophy, Marxism is not identical with economic determinism. The social, political and cultural history is determined, because nature is a cosmos—a law-governed rational system. But just as in nature, there are more than one determining factor in history. Human intelligence is one of them. Cultural history, particularly, is ideally determined to a very large extent.

The materialist conception of history fails when it dismisses ideal systems (ideologies) as mere superstructures of economic relations, and tries to relate them directly with the material conditions of life. The logical development of ideas and the generation of new social forces take place simultaneously, together providing the motive force of history. But in no given period can they be causally connected except in the sense that action is always motivated by ideas. A new idea must be referred back to an old idea. Philosophy has a history of its own, and it is not a kaleidoscope of phantoms. Inasmuch as action is motivated by ideas, determinism in

[6] A. N. Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas.*

history is primarily ideal. Historical Determinism comes to grief whenever its exponents take a superficial, one-sided view, ignoring the dynamics of ideas.

From time to time, the march of history is, obstructed by the requirements of the established social order, which sets a limit to human creativeness, mental as well as physical. The urge for progress and freedom, born out of the biological struggle for existence, asserts itself with a renewed vigour to break down the obstacle. A new social order conducive to a less hampered unfolding of human potentialities is visualised by men, embodying the liberating ideas and cultural values created in the past. A new philosophy is born out of the spiritual heritage of mankind, to herald a reorganisation of society.

The passionate belief in the creativeness and freedom of man is the essence of the romantic view of life. The idea of revolution, therefore, is a romantic idea; at the same time, it is rational because revolutions take place of necessity. Revolution, thus, may appear to be a self-contradictory concept. Can reason and romanticism be fitted into the selfsame evolutionary process? That is the fundamental problem of the philosophy of history.

The rational order of nature and history is determined; it must run its course; it cannot be changed by any human endeavour. That rationalist view seems to exclude the possibility of revolution. But there is another way of looking at the thing without abandoning the rationalist position. Human will is a part of nature; it also grows out of the rational order. Man's desire, and endeavours in pursuance thereof, are also determined; therefore, revolutions take place of necessity; they are historically determined. As mutations in history, they are inherent in the rational process of social evolution.

The difference between reason and romanticism is that

one perceives what is necessary and therefore possible, whereas the other declares impetuously what is desirable, what should be done. Is the idea of revolution, then, irrational? Is there no room for reason in the scheme of revolutionary practice? There must be, if revolutions take place of necessity. Romanticism tempered with reason, and rationalism enlivened by the romantic spirit of adventure, pave the road to successful revolutions.

The apparently baffling problem stated above arises from a syllogistic interpretation of the complicated warp and woof of actual life, unfolding itself in the context of the rational system of nature. Rationalism is the intellectual and moral sanction for the classical view of life. On the other hand, romanticism is a revolt against the classical conservative attitude; therefore, it is irrational. This syllogistic simplification confuses teleological rationalism with the secular concept of reason. The latter is identical with human intelligence, and therefore cannot be antithetical to will. In the last analysis, there is no contradiction between rationalism and the romantic view of life. The two are harmonised in the idea of revolution. If romanticism is the urge of the will of man to break out of the elaborate chains of tradition, orthodoxy and teleological reason, then it is the most powerful incentive to revolution.

The romantic view of life is subjective. It logically leads to the liberating doctrine that man is the maker of the world, developed during a whole period of history from Vico to Marx. Indeed, it originated earlier, in the Renaissance, which represented the revolt of man against the tyranny of teleological reason and the theological moral order. On the other hand, secular rationalism, developed in the modern scientific view of life, is objective. It places man, grown out of the background of an evolutionary process in the context of a law-governed physical Universe, in

the centre of the world, ultimately subject to the laws of nature, but having the possibility, if not every time the actual power, of progressively acquiring mastery over it. Essentially, there is little difference between the two views of life. Modern psychology has eliminated the distinction between the subject and the object. By doing so, it has solved the old problem of perception, and freed philosophy from the vicious circle of epistemology.

Marxism is an attempted synthesis between the two apparently antithetical views of life—the rationalist and the romantic. Perhaps Marx himself was not aware of the far-reaching implication of his philosophy; therefore, it remained full of fallacies, which could be explained only by dogmatic interpretations and spurious interpolations. The attempt wil] have to be completed so as to combine the various currents of past thought into a comprehensive system of the philosophy of life. But thereafter, new contradictions will arise, and the history of philosophy as well as of society will go on and on for ever. That philosophy is sublime which opens up before mankind the vista of infinity without deluding it into the wilderness of metaphysical abstractions and fantasies.

CHAPTER II

HUMAN NATURE

MORE than two hundred and fifty thousand years have passed since the origin of the human species. It is rather an arbitrary estimate. Because anthropology has discarded the hypothesis of monogenesis. However, the point is that only a small fraction of the time during which the human race has inhabited the earth comes under the purview of recorded history. Another period is covered by legends, myths, mythologies and epics. The historical value of those superstitious, poetical, imaginary and hear-say accounts of prehistory is of late being increasingly appreciated. Eventually, the scope of history proper may be extended backwards. Even then, by far the larger part of the time since the origin of the human species will remain the realm of prehistory. Yet, whatever is constant in human nature was formed during those remote days. Anthropology will have to dig deep in that subsoil in order to discover the hidden springs of the mental evolution of the species.

The history of the infancy and adolescence of the human species coincides with the process of biological evolution. It is therefore that subsequent history, the history of civilisation, is to be regarded as an organic evolutionary process; and it could be rationally explained only when it was so conceived. The history of the infancy and adolescence of the human race has to be biologically reconstructed—as stages in the process of the biological evolution of the species. The biological approach to pre-history, the history of early savagery, throws a flood of light on the age-old problem of human nature.

The knowledge about the descent of man rules out the doctrine of creation. The appearance of man on earth

having no other reason than the origin of a new biological species, the laws of the development of the human race cannot be essentially different from the general laws of organic evolution. Human nature, therefore, is determined by those laws. Subject to an evolutionary process, it cannot be an immutable category. It is a hackneyed saying that human nature never changes. The truth, however, is just the contrary: To change is human nature. Otherwise, there is no sense in regarding the history of civilisation as an evolutionary process.[1] Yet, just as life is the red thread running through the whole process of biological evolution, similarly, there is a residue of "humanness" underlying the flux of the process even before it has gone beyond the borderland where the primitive man is still not fully differentiated from his animal ancestry. The origin of humanness, therefore, antedates the origin of the species. That is a logical corollary to the doctrine of descent. The origin of a new species is a mutation in the process of evolution. The qualitative change, however, is superficially functional; the biological form involved in the process undergoes no essential change, anatomically or physiologically. In structure and size, the brain of the primitive man differs very little from that of the anthropoid ape. The one inherits the mental and emotional equipments of the other as the basis of "humanness" which, therefore, is a direct outcome of the process of biological evolution ever since the origin of organic matter.

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[1] "The foundation of all understanding of sociological theory—that is to say, of all understanding of human life—is that no static maintenance of perfection is possible. This axiom is rooted in the nature of things. Advance or decadence are the only choices offered to mankind..... The very essence of reality, that is, of completely real, is process. Thus, each actual thing is only to be understood in terms of its becoming and perishing. There is no halt in which actuality is just its static self, accidentally played upon by qualifications derived from shift of circumstances. The converse is the truth..... The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the Universe." (A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*').

Notwithstanding any obstinate scepticism in that respect, science has abolished the *hiatus* between inanimate nature and the organic world. Life grows out of the background of non-living matter. There is a causal connection between the two. It would be going beyond the purview of this work to dispel all doubt on that score. The point of departure is the scientific view which rules out the doctrine of creation as an unnecessary hypothesis. The physical Universe is a cosmos; living nature is a part of that law-governed system; it logically follows that the processes of organic evolution are also determined. Empirical knowledge, which culminated in the discoveries of Darwin and Wallace, corroborated this logical hypothesis. It went into the formulation of the doctrine of evolution, which represented discovery of reason in living nature. "Just as physiology has found no case of interference with the order of nature as revealed by physics and chemistry, the study of evolution has brought to light no principle which cannot be observed in the experience of ordinary life and successfully submitted to the analysis of reason."[2]

Taking place in the context of the law-governed physical Universe, biological evolution is also a rational process. Life is neither an inexplicable category called intuition, nor is it a mysteriously purposive urge; it is a determined physical process. In metaphysical terms, it is the unfolding of reason in nature. But reason itself is not a metaphysical category; it was not conceived as such until the necessity for rationalising the irrationalism of the so-called revealed religions was felt. Then, the concept of reason was identified with the *ad hoc* doctrine of Providence in order to mitigate the absurdity of the notion of an anthropomorphic God, and to fit both the notion of God and the doctrine of Providence into philosophical thought (theology), which

[2] J. B. S. Haldane, *Facts and Faith.*

developed throughout the ages under the impact of reason inherited by the human species as a primitive instinct from its immediate animal ancestry. Reason is the simple, instinctive, notion that every object of experience is connected with some other object or objects which may or may not have been already experienced; but, because of the belief in the connection, which holds the world of experience together, their existence is assumed. There, belief is to be defined as a conviction regarding matters of fact. This notion determined all the forms of early human thought, such as magic, fetishism, animism and natural religion.

Consciousness is the property of life in the zoological world. It means to be aware of the environments. Simple awareness is presently supplemented by reactions to the things of which the organism becomes aware. From that stage of biological evolution, there begins the growth of the nervous system to serve as the means of inter-relations between the organism and its environment. The growth culminates in the formation of the brain which, physiologically, is called the mind. So, mind is the highest expression of the property of life called consciousness, and thought, that of reaction to simple awareness. The mind becomes conscious of the environments, the radius of which gradually expands until the entire nature is embraced. It being consciousness of a law-governed system, human mind is necessarily rational in essence.

In other words, the intellectual and spiritual life of the primitive man was conditioned by the elemental instinct of reason. It is an instinct, because it is a product of pre-human biological evolution. "The very beasts associate the idea of things that are like each other or that have been found together in their experience; they could hardly survive for a day if they ceased to do so."[3] In his later works,

[3] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough.*

Darwin had shown that every aspect of the mental constitution of man could be referred back to animal mentality. A whole succession of anthropologists and historians of culture subsequently developed the idea. Robert Briffault, for example, wrote in 1927 that "a scientific psychology has become possible since the fact has been apprehended that the human mind is built upon a foundation of primal impulses common to all forms of life, of instincts similar to those which shape animal behaviour."

Conceptual thought distinguishes the mind of the savage from that of the anthropoid ape. But let it be repeated that even then there is little anatomical or morphological difference. Conceptual thought depends on language. So, it can be said that man is fully differentiated from his animal ancestry only when he coins words for expressing definite ideas. But from this it does not follow that memory, some very primitive ability of associating things and events, and the habit of expressing emotions through behaviour, are altogether absent in lower animals. Indeed, they do communicate feelings through articulate sounds. Koehler's experiments with chimpanzees are the most instructive in this connection. He came to the conclusion that they had "a high degree of intelligence" enabling them to solve practical problems. But their thought and the resulting action are dependent entirely on stimuli from objects in their field of vision.[4] The step from that mental state to the human mind capable of conceptual thought is long. The causal chain of mental evolution, however, is not broken. Memory is the ultimate basis of conceptual thought, and animals do possess memory. That is evident from their observable be-

[4] My long and fairly systematic observation of animal behaviour, particularly of cats, warrants disagreement with the view that animals are altogether incapable of what can be called conceptual thought. Rudiments of that human capacity are clearly discernible in them. There behaviour is often determined by the memory of things not present in their field of vision.

haviour. Language enables the savage to attach labels to-the mental equipments inherited from the animal ancestry, and consequently it becomes easier for him to remember past experiences and differentiate one object of experience from another. The result is the origin of conceptual thought—thinking stimulated by mental images.

An insight into the biological substrata of the mental and emotional life of the *homo sapiens* compels rejection of the time-honoured dictum that human nature is to believe. The scientific basis of this tendentious doctrine^ which served the purpose of bolstering up the irrationalism of revealed religion at the cost of reason, is an uncritical acceptance of the evidence of the superstitions of the savage, which survived the infancy and adolescence of the race, and are found still lingering in civilised society. The venerable doctrine about the constant of human nature can be differently stated: Man is naturally superstitious. Superstition being the result of ignorance, the corollary to the doctrine would be that ignorance is the natural state of man. Differently formulated, we have the traditional saying "ignorance is bliss".

Anthropology and critical history of culture have traced the superstitions of the savage to his instinctive rationality—nothing comes out of nothing, everything is caused by something else. The idea was far from being as clear as that in the mind of the savage. Therefore, it must be called instinctive; it was still a matter of biological mechanism, determined by the latter's causal connection with the cosmos of the physical Universe. In other words, instinctive rationality was a vague feeling on the part of the primitive man; and elemental feelings are automatic biological reactions. Instinctive rationality rules out belief in anything supernatural. Man being a part of nature, as long as he clings to the mother's breast, his mind cannot possibly

conceive of anything outside nature. The idea of God as well as of anything supernatural* is entirely absent in the mind of the savage. Researches into the origin of civilisation led Lubbock, for instance, to the conclusion that "atheism" was the characteristic feature of the mentality of the primitive man, "understanding by this term not a denial of the existence of a deity, but an absence of any definite idea on the subject."[5] The same authority is more explicit in another place. "The lowest races have no religion; when what may perhaps be in a sense called religion first appears, it differs essentially from ours; it is an affair of this world, not of the next; the deities are mortal, not immortal, a part, not authors, of nature." Again, "Even among the higher races, we find that the words now denoting supernatural things betray in almost all, if not all, cases an earlier physical meaning."[6] This opinion, endorsed by other authorities like Tylor and Frazer, is based on data gathered in course of extensive and painstaking scientific researches among primitive tribes in different parts of the world.

The residue of humanness, therefore, is the biological heritage of reason. To put the same thing differently, human nature is not to believe, but to struggle for freedom and search for truth, the latter aspect manifesting itself in *homo sapiens.* The distinction is fundamental. Belief in supernatural beings or mysterous metaphysical forces would make submission to the object of belief the essence of human nature. If that was the case, man would have never emerged from the state of savagery. Because, as soon as the biological form belonging to the human species became a thinking being, mind and thought entered into the process of organic evolution as its determining factors. Having

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[5] John Lubbock, Lord Aveburry, *The Origin of Civilisation.*

[6] Ibid.

grown out of the background of the law-governed physical Universe, they are rational categories; therefore, the entire subsequent process of man's intellectual and emotional development is also rational.

Before man's imagination populated nature with gods and hit upon the practice of propitiating them with prayers and sacrifices, the savage believed that he could obtain similar results by magic. "Magic rose before religion in the evolution of our race, and man essayed to bend nature to his wishes by the sheer force of spells and enchantments before he strove to coax and mollify a coy, capricious or irascible deity by the soft insinuation of prayer and sacrifice."[7] Frazer has shown that there is a close analogy between the magical and the scientific conceptions of the world. Both assume a succession of events according to immutable laws, the operation of which can be foreseen and, therefore, events predicted or anticipated. "It (magic) assumes that in nature one event follows another necessarily and invariably without intervention of any spiritual or personal agency. Thus, its fundamental conception is identical with that of modern science; underlying the whole system is a faith, implicit but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature. The magician does not doubt that the same causes will always produce the same effects."[8] Magic, thus, is antagonistic to faith, even of the natural religion, which allows gods to regulate the operation of natural phenomena according to the wishes of the supplicating man. Yet, there was a time when magic and natural religion were closely associated, proving that the latter was also an expression of rationality inherent in human nature, "a device of human reason ".

Both magic and natural religion assumed, one explicitly

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[7] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough.*

[8]Ibid.

and the other by implication, that man can have the power to free himself from the domination of the ruthless forces of nature by controlling them either directly through spells and incantations, or indirectly by propitiating the gods who were conceived as enormously more powerful men. When experience exposed the limitations of the terrestrial magician's power, the savage looked up to celestial ones—the gods of the natural religion. They were not conceived as superhuman immortal beings; they were parts of nature, being originators and controllers of its various phenomena. They represented the ideal of man—personifications of power and freedom, power as the means to freedom.

Animism is supposed to prove that the primitive man instinctively believes in supernatural forces. The defenders of this view hold that animism was antecedent to magic, being the origin of religion. Their whole argument centres around the term "anima" which, they maintain, was conceived by the savage as something immaterial, spiritual. The notion of an immaterial soul, which eventually came to be a cardinal dogma of religion, is said to have originated in animism. The controversy about the priority of animism or magic is anthropologically important; philosophically, it is immaterial. The case of those who hold that it is human nature to believe does not improve even if priority is conceded to animism.

The doctrine of soul, indeed, originated in animism; in that sense, the root of religion may be traced to the philosophy of the savage who believed that all actions and reactions in nature were purposeful. But the *anima* was not something separate from the body; it was a "vaporous materiality", identified with breath. There is abundant philological evidence to that effect. In all the old languages —Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Roman, Slavonic, Arabic—the words for soul or spirit etymologically mean "breath".

Now, breath is a property of the body; animism thus placed soul in the body. "It is one thing to Regard an object as having anthropological consciousness, and another to believe that consciousness is a distinct power capable of quitting it or of surviving its destruction or of existing independently. The human spirit is not necessarily believed to enter upon a life after death, still less is the spirit of the animal."[9] The word anima means life. The soul of animism clearly was a biological notion. It was not a matter of belief, but result of experience. Savages hold the animistic doctrine of soul "on the very evidence of their senses interpreted on the biological principle which seems to them most reasonable."[10] Tylor, therefore, speaks of the "logic of the savage". On all competent authority, animism was also an expression of the rationality of the primitive man. The fact that it contained the germ of religion only proves that the latter also is essentially rational.

If the prejudices of animism did not place their sanctions outside nature, natural religion was the rational effort of the barbarian to explain the phenomena of nature and his experience thereof. Had the notion of a creator or an almighty Ged or a cosmic force been current in the dawn of civilisation, then the barbarian would not feel the necessity to search for the cause of such natural phenomena as rain, storm, movements of the stars etc.,—a search which led to his inventing the gods of natural religion. The search was an expression of his innate rationality: everything must have a cause. The gods were conceived as great magicians who could make nature bend before their will, and magicians were men who knew the laws of nature, and that knowledge gave them the power of divination.

Natural religions were theoretical systems "devised by

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[9]Carveth Read, *Man and His Superstitions.*

[10] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture,*

human reason, without supernatural aid or revelation."[11] A similar view was held many centuries earlier by Thomas Aquinas. "Some religious truths are attainable by the unaided exercise of human reason, while others required the disclosure of supernatural revelation before they could be known." This doctrine was preached by mediaeval theologians with the object of reconciling Christianity with the natural religion of the pagans. But incidentally it admitted that simple deism was a rational cult as against the mysticism of the revealed religion.

Having reached the conclusion that the age of religion-was preceded by the age of magic, Frazer takes up the investigation of the cause which induced mankind to turn its mind in another direction, and identifies it with the urge for a true theory of nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account. "Men for the first time recognised their inability to manipulate at pleasure certain natural forces which hitherto they had believed to be completely within their control… Thus cut adrift from his ancient moorings and left to toss on a troubled sea of doubts and uncertainty, our primitive [philosopher must have been sadly perplexed..... If the great world went on its way without the help of him or his fellows, it must surely be because there were other beings, like himself, but far stronger, who, unseen themselves, directed its course and brought about all the varied series of events which he had hitherto believed to be dependent on his own magic."[12]

The still lingering belief that the sense of morality is intimately associated with religion, is not borne out by historical research. The savage, with no notion of God, has a strong sense of good and bad. With him, it is instinctive;;

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[11] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture.*

[12] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough.*

that is to say, his sense of morality is not prompted by any inner voice, nor is it dictated by the fear of God. Morality, therefore, is also essentially rational. The fashionable expression—"law of the jungle" —only betrays human conceit. There are rules of conduct even among higher animals. Those rules go into the composition of human instincts. They are part of man's biological heritage—the constant of human nature. In man, they express themselves as the sense of morality. One knows from experience what is good for him and what is bad for him. Therefrom he generalises that what is good for him is good for all like himself, and what is bad for him is also bad for all. That is the origin of morality.

Modern historical research has revealed that philosophy is older than religion, if superstitions of the savage, such as fetishism, magic and animism, and also the spurious piety of the barbarian, who propitiates the gods of natural religion for selfish motives, are not counted as religion. This fact proves that human nature is essentially rational, because rationalism is the guiding principle of philosophical thought. The earliest, philosophies were the first attempts of human intelligence to explain natural phenomena in physical terms without assuming supernatural agencies causing them. The piont of departure of those attempts was the belief that nature was a rational, law-governed, system. That belief was possible because human mind, not yet confused by metaphysical speculations, nor lured by religious imaginations, could function in its native posture—in tune with nature. The relation between philosophy and religion, between reason and faith, can be clearly traced in the history of the western world. Science as a free enquiry into nature, and philosophy as a rational plan for attaining the ideal of "good life" developed to a high level in ancient Greece, centuries before the rise of Christianity. Natural

religions, which preceded scientific enquiry and philosophical thought, were pseudo-theological systems, also devised by human reason. Their theology was spurious, because the gods of natural religion were made by men, after their own image, and lived in nature.

The ancient history of the other countries of old civilisation is still to be reconstructed. But even now there i& enough reliable evidence indicating that religion in the strict sense was a later development there also. In India, the Vedic age of natural religion was followed by a period of rational enquiries, fragmentarily recorded in the Upanishads. Out of them rose the systems of philosophy. Hindu religion as expounded in the iVedanta and Gita was a later development. The sequence is not clear, with a good deal of overlapping and many long gaps, because Hinduism is not a revealed religion. In China, there was no religion until Buddhism in a degenerated form came from India. Of the two currents of thought in ancient China Confucianism was rational and Taoism naturalist.

In the present stage of world history, pending the composition of a universal history, the evolution of thought in the western world has to be taken as the general pattern. More than six hundred years before the rise of Christianity, there developed in Greece an intellectual life which laid the spiritual foundation of modern civilisation. Full of vigour, it survived the onslaught of an organised religion which completely dominated European mind for more than a thousand years. Ancient Greek thought was rationalist, and consequently the earliest philosophy was materialism. "Long before the rise of the philosophers, a freer and more enlightened conception of the Universe had spread amongst the higher ranks of society.[13]

[13] Lange, *History of Materialism.*

A gallaxy of bold thinkers beginning with Thales gave various explanations of the Universe without going outside nature. Their common point of departure was that "nothing is without a cause." Anaxagoras, for instance, spoke of the "world-forming Reason". After more than two-thousand years, that early prophet of rationalism inspired the leaders of the French Revolution, to the extent that ultimately Robespierre made a goddess of reason^- Diogenes of Apollonia declared that the world was regulated by reason and identified it with air. Leukippos thought that the "logos" was nothing but the mechanical law which guided the movement of atoms. The ideas of the earlier philosophers were summarised by the founder of physics, Democritos, who held that the postulate of the absolute necessity of all things was the condition for the study of nature, and also of any rational knowledge of nature. Empedocles regarded rationality as an eternal property of the elements. The founder of the Eleatic school, Xenophanes, was also a rationalist.

Socrates was not alone to drink the cup of poison. Even Aristotle, who later on became the patron-saint of Christian theology, had to flee from Athens to escape a similar fate. All the works of Protagoras were burnt, and he also escaped the wrath of the priesthood of natural religion by fleeing. Anaxagoras was arrested, but managed to run away and save himself. Diogenes was persecuted as an atheist. Yet, the wisdom of the first philosophers survived not only decayed natural religion, but the powerful onslaught of Christianity. Christian theology accepting the authority of the atheist Aristotle was a revenge of nature.

Because of a multitude of definitions, or of the absence of rational ones, the concepts of freedom and truth are dismissed by practical men as objects of metaphysical speculation. Yet, the quest for freedom is the incentive which differentiates the human species from its biological background.

It is the most basic human urge, though most of the time it remains buried deep under the surface of consciousness. Indeed, the incentive itself is a biological heritage. Of course, in the context of the pre-human process of organic evolution, the incentive for freedom has a physical connotation. It expresses itself in the struggle for existence. To live is to survive the deadly impacts of the forces of nature.[14] To live, organisms must not only free themselves from the stranglehold of inanimate nature, but struggle also against other manifestations of life itself. Therefore, every success in the biological struggle for existence can be called a conquest of freedom.

It seems to be more difficult to trace the highly philosophical and ethical concept of truth in the biological essence of human nature. Is it not a purely metaphysical category? If it were, then, it could have nothing to do with human nature, which is physically determined, biological evolution being a process embedded in the physical Universe. But before the appearance of *homo sapiens,* who could philosophise, populate nature with supernatural beings, imagine a metaphysical cosmic force or will, and conceive of ethical values, it was not all a spiritual void. The psyche is said to be the repository of residues antedating *homo sapiens.* The psyche, however, is not a mystic entity serving as the link between the mortal man and the immortal world-spirit. It is the subconscious part of the mind—a biological heritage, the storehouse of experiences of the primitive man as well as of his vertebrate animal ancestors. The psyche is not a mystic entity, because, as the subject of the science of psychology, it can be reduced to physico-chemical constituents, with which philosophy can build the bridge across the gulf between

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[14] "The meaning of cultural progress is in a conflict between Eros and Death, between the Life-instinct and the Instinct of Destruction. This conflict is the essential import of life, and cultural progress is consequently to be described as the struggle for the existence of mankind." (Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents).*

physics and psychology. The psyche, in other words, is the umbelical chord which binds man, with all his spiritual attributes, to Mother Nature—the physical world. All metaphysical concepts and ethical values, conceived and created by *homo sapiens,* are physically determined; the psyche is a daughter of the Mother Earth.

Truth, therefore, is not a metaphysical concept. It is a matter of human experience. It is a matter of fact. Truth is correspondence with> objective reality,— the relation between two objects of experience. Therefore, it is the content of knowledge. The old saying, "knowledge is power," is not an empty phrase. It summarises the lesson of the entire human experience. The biological struggle for existence was a blyKl urge; man's struggle for freedom from the tyranny of the forces of nature was guided by his knowledge of nature. The one became successful in proportion to the increase of the latter. The biological heritage of the quest of freedom created already in the savage the urge for knowledge which gave him power to carry on the struggle against the forces of nature. The search for truth, therefore, is intimately associated with the quest of freedom as the essence of human nature.

CHAPTER III

THE LAW-GOVERNED UNIVERSE

IT is a very significant fact of the history of philosophy that Christian theology and scholastic learning, as represented by Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, Ockham and others, conceived and developed the pregnant idea of a law-governed Universe,[1] which inspired the pioneers, like Giordano Bruno, Cusa, Copernicus and Galileo, to lay down the foundation of modern science. Without that idea as its point of departure, no science would be possible. The germs of modern science thus grew in the womb of the dark Middle-Ages, which was dominated by the mysticism of a so-called revealed religion. Reason triumphed over faith in a struggle which lasted for a whole millennium.

But a much more significant fact is that, even during the first thousand years of the Christian era, reason was not altogether overwhelmed by faith. The breakdown of the antique social order created a spiritual chaos. That was a time when Freudian "paranoiacs" sought "to set the world right by means of a fantasy which they proceeded to translate into reality."[2] A mass fantasy was created by an increasingly large number of "paranoiacs" uniting to bring about a state of happiness by reforming painful and depressing realities in conformity with a delusion. Yet, the rational essence of human nature successfully weathered all those vicissitudes, to reassert itself ultimately as the revolt of man against the Almighty God and his more powerful agents on earth. As a mater of fact, even the mysticism of

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[1] Theology is the application of reason to religious beliefs and the attempt to state them in a systematic manner.

[2] Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents.*

a revealed religion is but a perverted form of rationalism inherent in human nature. Mysticism does not deny order in nature, but only ascribes it to the inscrutable will of God: It is too grand a scheme to be comprehended by human intelligence.

"The technique of religion consists in lowering the values of life and distorting the image of the real world in a fantastic way; and this presupposes the intimidation of the intelligence. By the forceful fixation of a psychic infantilism and its incorporation into a mass fantasy, religions succeed in saving many people from an individual neurosis."[3] So, mystic religious belief is only a consolation for the tormented soul tossing in the stormy sea of uncertainty. That is a temporary predicament. The origin and history of religion are psychological problems; they are inherent in the evolution of the human mind. All attempts to solve these problems must begin not with gratuitous assumptions, such as "it is human nature to believe", but with obvious and elementary questions.

"Why did human beings ever come to hold these opinions at all, and how did they arrive at them? What was there in the condition of early man which made him to frame to himself such abstract notions of one or more great supernatural agents of whose objective existence he had certainly in nature no clear and obvious evidence? What first suggested to the mind of man the notion of deity in the abstract? And, how from the early multiplicity of deities did the conception of a single great and unlimited deity first take its rise? Why did men ever believe there were gods at all, and why from many gods did they arrive at one?"*

Answers to these pertinent questions are to be found in a philosophical examination of the intellectual development

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[3] Freud, *Ibid.*

[4] Grant Alien, *The Evolution of the Idea of God.*

of the human race. The enquiry leads to the conclusion that religion was the refuge of the frustrated rationalism of the savage. In the absence of positive knowledge, and owing to the impossibility of gaining it under the circum-.stances of the age, the attempts of the great ancient thinkers —those forerunners of science and philosophy—to explain nature rationally, were bound to be speculative. Only a few could rise to the dizzy heights of speculative thought, as distinct from "the fantasy of paranoiacs". But natural religion could not permanently satisfy the curiosity of mankind at the dawn of civilisation. Adolescent human intelligence, generally, required something less infantile and more convincing. "Religion is the outcome of an effort to explain all things—physical, metaphysical and moral—by analogies drawn from human society, imaginatively and symbolically considered. In short, it is a universal sociological hypothesis, mystical in form."[5]

More correctly, it is an intellectual hypothesis. Instinctively believing that everything is caused, man must imagine causes of the objects of his experience, if he cannot discover them; and the imaginary causes of the diverse phenomena must eventually be traced to a final cause. Summarising the findings of "the modern science of the history of religion", a dissenting author of great competence writes: "The ideas of God and of the soul are the result of early fallacious reasonings about misunderstood experience."[6]

The logical view of the origin and evolution of religious thought is corroborated by the various definitions of religion given by recognised authorities on the subject. All those definitions can be classified under two heads: "intellectual" and "affective ". Herbert Spencer's definition—"religion is the recognition of a mystery pressing for interpretation"—

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[5]M. Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future.*

[6]Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion.*

is the most representative of the former category. "Mystery" and "interpretation" are the key words. Ever since the dawn of civilisation, man has been trying to interpret the mysteries of nature. The effort presupposes that the mysteries can be interpreted. Instinctive rationalism is the basis of that assumption. So defined, religion differs essentially little from science, which also proposes to explain the mysteries of nature. Only, for science, mysteries are as yet unknown relations and functions of nature, which are still to be discovered, known and explained. Explanation can be hypothetical as well as empirical; religious interpretation of the mysteries of nature, however, is imaginary. The gods of the natural religion or the Supreme Being of monotheism are analogous to the hypothesis of science. Thus conceived, religion is a backward stage of science—of the human quest for knowledge and truth. Essentially it is a rational system of thought, limited by the inadequate store of positive knowledge. When the available store of knowledge is not sufficient for setting up theoretically verifiable working hypotheses, human spirit thirsting for knowledge necessarily falls back on imagination. The result is religion.

This view of religion is further developed by other competent investigators in the field. For instance, Sabatier came to the conclusion that religion "is a commerce, a conscious and willed relation, into which the soul in distress enters with the mysterious powers on which it feels that its destiny depends."[7] This is a corroboration of the view suggested above that religion is frustrated rationalism of the savage. The unknown relations and functions of nature are declared to be beyond the reach of human intelligence; they are determined by imaginary powers, who or which are not essentially different from man, because the latter can enter into relation with them. All the processes of nature, which en-

[7] A. Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion.*

velop human existence, are determined; but man does not know how; therefore, he must depend on powers which are supposed to run the mechanism of the world. Freud's picture of religious mentality brings out the salient point of Sabatier's conclusion.

Anthropology is concerned with the primitive state of the race. Frazer's definition of religion, nevertheless, has a general application. He defines religion as the "propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life."[8] The gods of natural religion were propitiated by sacrifice; prayer in higher forms of religion serves the same purpose. The point of the definition is that the basic assumption of religious thought, whether polytheistic or monotheistic, is that nature is a law-governed system; the laws may be given by superior powers, but, inasmuch as they govern human life, and direct the course of nature, in the context of which human life is lived, they can be discovered. Therefore, Max Muller defined religion as "a department of thought". Belief and thought are not identical functions of the human brain. Thinking is a rational process.

Turning to the affective definitions of religion, one must accept Schleiermacher's as the most representative: "Religion is a feeling of absolute dependence upon God." The similarity with Sabatier's "intellectual" definition is evident. How did the feeling develop? And how was the idea of an Almighty God conceived? The conception of an idea is again a rational process. The starting point of the evolution of the idea of God was the instinctive urge to discover the causes of natural phenomena; eventually, the various superhuman agencies controlling the diverse phenomena of nature were traced to one supreme power. The metaphysical concept of a Final Cause is also a rational notion. Be-

[8] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough.*

cause, it excludes miracles, something coming out of nothing,, which are the characteristic feature of religious belief. The feeling of absolute dependence results from the experience: that man cannot influence the processes of nature, which go in their own way, presumably according to their own laws. In that state of helplessness, man imagines a Supreme Being as the creator and the ruler of the world. Having thus imagined the Final Cause, either anthropo-morphically or mystically, man subordinates himself to its effects. He does not surrender to an esoteric faith, but to his innate rationalism.

There is a significant corollary to Schleiermacher's definition of religion: "The religious sentiment is no doubt a feeling of dependence. But the feeling of dependence, really to give birth to religion, must provoke in one a reaction— a desire for deliverance."[9] Significantly enough, this implication of Schleiermacher's definition is pointed out by an agnostic historian of religion. The feeling of dependence is not coincident with religion; it precedes religion and gives birth to it. The feeling that the microcosm (man) is dependent on the imperious laws of the macrocosm (the physical Universe) is a secular feeling—a thoroughly rationalist view. That is the relation between religion and science, and it is a causal relation. Increasing knowledge of the relations and functions of nature progressively makes the feeling less poignant. In the absence of that knowledge, the feeling of dependence, born of experience, gets hold of the mind of man. He escapes the nemesis of the death instinct by completely surrendering himself to a saviour of his own imagination.

The most significant point of the corollary to Schleiermacher's fideist rationalism is that absolute dependence on God represents the urge for freedom. Man wants

[9] Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future.*

to know nature, because knowledge will give him the power to be free from her tyranny. Having failed to attain that secular object, man of the pre-scientific era surrenders to an Almighty God, hoping for deliverance with his help or by his grace. Religion thus, after all, is an expression of man's struggle against nature. There is nothing supernatural in it.

Finally, we have the affective definition of William James: "One might say that religious life consists in the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."[10] So, even the arch-irrationalist of our time admits that religious thought is essentially rational; the world is not enveloped in an inscrutable mystery; that there is an order. Order is a rational concept, and as such accessible to human intelligence. The point, however, is that even the most extravagant mysticism, if it tries to appeal to the reason of man, cannot get away from the idea that the world is a law-governed system, and human life, being a part of the world, is governed by reason. In other words, religion cannot get away from biology. Therefore, Christianity was bound to outgrow its original mysticism and culminate in a rationalist theology, which inspired the rise of modern science. The grand idea of a law-governed Universe is inherent in religious thought, and in course of time crystallises itself as the solvent of all religions. There is the dialectics of the dynamics of ideas.

In the nineteenth century, criticism of religion and religious philosophy was involved in a sterile controversy between "intellectualism" and "voluntarism". The controversy was sterile because it raised psychological problems which could not be solved in the atmosphere of inadequate biological knowedge of the time. Philosophically also, the

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[10] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

controversy was idle. Aristotle knew that there was no fundamental difference between intelligence and will. He described man as a "thinking desire". The urge underlying religious sentiment is not surrender, but desire. The surrender to God is motivated by the desire for deliverance. The relation between intelligence and will was recognised by some metaphysicians of the nineteenth century. "Will is not merely a function which sometimes accrues to consciousness, and is sometimes lacking; it is an integral part of consciousness."[11] Will is not an irrational impulse; the religious sentiment of absolute surrender to God is, in the last analysis, an intelligent act—an act committed with a purpose, believing that it will produce the desired result.

With the rise of monotheistic religions, man begins to come out of the spiritual wilderness of mysticism; theology becomes a logical system in order to rationalise anthropomorphic monotheism. On the other hand, monotheism itself is a rational concept. Primitive rationalism of the savage, the instinctive belief that every event is caused by some unseen power, populated the landscape 'with the numerous gods of natural religion. Monotheism followed as a corollary to that primitive rationalist view: The gods of natural religion, in their turn, must be traced to some cause. The search for the causes of the phenomena of nature ended in the notion of an Almighty Creator of the world. It is inherent in the logic of religious thought that the idea of one God, the supreme architect of the world, should follow from polytheism.

When the God of gods is a matter of logical deduction, he can be conceived as the "Universal Reason", as was actually done by the heralds of Christian monotheism, such as Socrates and Plato. After them the idea of a Supreme God developed in the metaphysics of Aristotle and the

[11] Wundt, *Ethics.*

Pantheism of the Stoics; both were antagonistic to the faith in a Creator. The Christian conception of God was anthropomorphic. The absurdity and naivety of the conception, therefore, was shrouded in mysticism, revelation being a mystic cult. Otherwise, straight-forward-; unabashed, anthropomorphic monotheism opens up the floodgates of rationalism. Islamic monotheism, the most rigid and naivest form of the creed, had that consequence. Christian theology, though based upon the rational idea of a Supreme Being, conceived as the "Universal Reason", could defy reason so long as its monotheism remained confused by the trinitarian dogma. The confusion was not cleared until Arabic thought penetrated Europe to influence scholastic learning. As soon as Christian theology outgrew mysticism and became consistently monotheistic, it heralded the rise of modern science by proclaiming that the Universe was a law-governed system. The continuity of human thought, as the red thread running through the entire history of the human race, is remarkable.

The state of savagery is the intellectual infancy of man. In that state, primitive rationality takes the form of the belief in the volition of invisible supreme powers behind the diverse phenomena of nature. In course of time, experience reinforces reason, and man attains intellectual adolescence. The discovery that events in his immediate environments and of direct experience, such as the fall of stones, flow of water, rustling of leaves, movement of shadows, so on and so forth, are due to physical causes, enables man to outgrow the animistic belief of the savage. The religion of the primitive man progressively discards the infantile faith in the arbitrary volition of invisible powers, and moves towards the doctrine of law, conceived as the providence. The intellectual development is towards monotheism—the notion of an Almighty Being ruling the world according to reason or

law. In the last analysis, monotheistic religion is also a result of the rationality of man.

Monotheism, however, did not grow directly out of the background of the polytheistic natural religion. Metaphysical and moral thoughts, which followed the unsuccessful attempts of early science and philosophy, went into the making of the monotheistic religions, particularly, Christianity. Therefore, even during the dark Middle-Ages, reason could not be altogether suffocated by blind faith; and eventually, it reasserted itself in the scholastic learning of great Christian theologians who heralded the Renaissance of science and philosophy. The early fathers of the Christian Church took pride in pointing out the agreement between their doctrines and the principles of Greek philosophy. They asserted that faith and reason were not mutually exclusive." Many centuries later, scholasticism developed that doctrine into the notion of a law-governed Universe.

The failure of ancient naturalist speculations gave rise to doubt about the possibility of positive knowledge. On the one hand, the belief in the gods of natural religion had been shaken by the bold speculations of the early philosophers. In that atmosphere of intellectual unsettlement and scepticism, the attention of the thinking man was turned towards the problems of human life, which were in the reach of direct observation. The intellectual life of Greece, at that time, was dominated by the "wise men" known in history as the Sophists. The founder of that school, Protagoras, enunciated the dictum: "Man is the measure of things", which came to be the guiding principle of Humanism throughout the subsequent ages. Sophist rationalism exposed the fallacies and absurdities of traditional beliefs, and compelled all thinking men to probe deeply into the problems of human life. Socrates was a Sophist; but he was also a pious Athenian. Yet, he incurred the wrath

of the priesthood and put on the martyr's crown of thorns, because he laid the foundation of a monotheistic theology. Above all, he was a rationalist. The terms "God" and "Reason " were used by him interchangeably. He differed from the Ionion naturalists in that he deduced laws inductively, starting from man and his experience. He restated the humanist doctrine of Protagoras as follows: "The world is explained from man, not man from the universal laws of nature." He taught that the universal Reason which had created the world could be conceived only on the pattern of human reason. Anthropomorphic monotheism was only a step from the rationalist Humanism of Socrates. Indeed, he actually postulated "an architect of the world ", and then proceeded to rationalise the concept. At that point, the threads of his thoughts were taken up by Plato, who elaborated the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology several hundred years before Christ. Early Christianity, thus, was not the ideology of slave revolt; nor later on, of Roman Imperialism. It resulted from the setback which Greek science and philosophy suffered in the intellectual atmosphere of the ancient world, which set a limit to the possibility of acquiring positive knowledge.

Plato developed the moral philosophy of Socrates, and found in the notion of One God a sanction for it. Placing reason above the world of sense perceptions, Plato, however, departed from the position of Socratic rationalism. Platonic Reason came to be a mystic conception; as such, it went into the making of the teleological view of the Universe, which was taken over by Christian theology. Nevertheless, Plato conceptually pictured the Universe as an interconnected system, mechanistic as well as teleological. Ideas represented the eternal laws of nature. Plato identified God with cosmic intelligence, which was co-existent with matter, but not antecedent to it. Clearly, all these doctrines, couched in a mystic terminology, can be fitted into a materialist philosophy.

Yet, they constituted the philosophical foundation of Christian theology.

From the proofs of "intelligence and design ", presented by all natural objects, Plato inferred a teleological view of the Universe. "All in the world is for the sake of the rest, and the places of the single parts are so ordered as to subserve to the preservation and excellency of the whole; hence, all things are derived from the operation of a divine intellectual cause."[12] That is a conceptional picture of the world as a law-governed system. Teleology is rationalism with the gratuitous notion of a Final Cause tacked on to it.

Although Platonic teleology became more articulated in Aristotle's doctrine of "Form and Matter ", the latter was the founder of exact sciences; as such, he rejected the master's mysticism, and attached greener importance to the rational trends of Platonic thought. Early Christianity was influenced by Plato's mysticism; but eventually, breaking away from oriental cults, it required a rationalist theology to triumph as a monotheistic religion. At that period of its history, Aristotle's logic and metaphysics became the foundation of Christian theology. His metaphysics, with its doctrine of the fourfold cause, made a religious philosophy possible. Conceiving the Supreme Being as the absolute substance, Aristotle put God in matter. Faith was thus reconciled with a rationalist view of the Universe. Quite inconsistently with his view that experience was the source of all knowledge, Aristotle asserted that the First Principle or the Final Cause was accessible through experience. Beginning empirically, his system degenerated into dogmatic speculations, which went into the making of the religious philosophy of the early Middle-Ages. His physics became metaphysics. In the absence of the material possibility of acquir-

[12] Draper, *The Intellectual Development of Europe.*

ing an exact knowledge of things and their inter-relations empirically, forms (ideas) became the subject matter of investigation, the instrument of which was logic. Under such intellectual conditions, philosophy was bound to degenerate into wild speculations which fostered Scepticism in healthy minds. In that intellectual chaos, the average man's mind was fascinated by the new faith heralded by the sage of the antiquity. To overcome scepticism, speculative philosophy prepared the way to a higher form of religion—Christian monotheism. Aristotle's rationalism laid the foundation of Christian theology, which was the result of a misapplied and perverted rationalism. With Plato, the idea of God was an *ad hoc* assumption, a product of poetic imagination; actually, a postulate. Aristotle placed God on an empirical background. He rationalised the idea of God.

The intellectual life of the antique society was overtaken by a spiritual crisis. Socrates set up his moral philosophy to stop the rot. But having no authoritative sanction, Socratic ethics could not stem the tide of scepticism. The relativist ethics of the Sophists had a greater attraction. Plato sought to supply a supernatural sanction to the moral philosophy of Socrates. But his "ideas" were too misty to carry any conviction with the sceptics. Aristotle's Final Cause served the purpose of stabilising the spiritual life by giving it a new orientation—a rationalised theology for a monotheistic religion. Aristotle derived morality from an immutable First Principle—of Goodness and Truth, that is, from God. The Stoics took over Aristotle's ethics, but rejected the speculative elements of his as well as Plato's philosophy. Early Christianity was a combination of Hebrew monotheism and Stoic ethics.

The Stoics combatted scepticism with the following argument: Everything unreasonable is dangerous. The pleasures and pains of the body are to be disregarded; only the pleasure and pain of the intellect are the concern of

man. By his passions, man is made a slave; his reason makes him free. It is his duty to overcome the senses and despise passions. Thus, man becomes free and virtuous.

Early Christianity spread as the revolt of man against Roman despotism. It rose to satisfy an intellectual need and moral craving of the time. A common misfortune had overtaken the peoples of the Roman world. Their faith in the gods of natural religion was undermined by the fact that they could do nothing to help their devotees. In the absence of any faith, demoralisation spread far and wide. In that depressing atmosphere, Christianity rose to declare the equality of all men before God. It was naturally hailed throughout the Roman world, and very soon penetrated every department of public life. Therefore, persecution failed, and Emperor Constantine embraced the new faith. Early Christianity was frankly contemptuous of learning, science and philosophy. But before long, it came under Platonic and Stoic influence. In the Patristic literature, mysticism mingled with Hellenic rationalism. Some of the early Church Fathers, notably Augustin, had been learned pagans before they became believing Christians. Nevertheless, in course of time, the Trinitarian controversy, the dispute over the mystic cult of trans-substantiation, overwhelmed the rationalism of Platonic theology adopted by the early Fathers. That setback was due to the fact that during that period Christianity compromised its monotheism in order to establish itself firmly in a pagan world.

The dark ages, however, did not last as long as is generally believed even to-day. The inroads of the barbarians from the North, and, two-hundred years later, the rise and dramatic spread of the Islamic power, dealt a staggering blow to the religion of miracle-mongering, idolatry and relic-worship to which Christianity had degenerated after the two centuries of Apostolic and Evangelist purity. No miracles happened to save Rome from the heathens from

the North; nor could the saints arrest the spectacular spread of Islam as far as the Atlantic coast. The necessity of purifying Christianity was felt by the more intelligent and learned inhabitants of the Roman world.

Early in the eighth century, the iconoclastic Emperor Leo the Isaurian ascended the throne of Constantinople. His edicts prohibiting image worship marked the beginning of the efforts to purify Christianity and make a truly monotheistic religion out of it. That was the commencement of the Byzantine theology with its doctrine of twofold truth-one to be attained by faith, and the other by reason. The exploits of the Khaliphs must have convinced Emperor Leo that monotheism was a much more powerful religion; and it is reported that he also acted under the influence of two Jewish advisers. He was denounced by the orthodox as a Mohammedan and a Jew. That fact proved that the Byzantine theology resulted from the influences of the two monotheistic religions—Judaism and Islam. The monks opposed Leo's iconoclasm, which was carried on by six successive Emperors over a period of hundred and twenty-five years. The monks were successful in their revolt against the reform, because they could sway the people steeped in ignorance and therefore given to superstitious beliefs.

Iconoclasm was defeated in the East, but it triumphed in the West. There, the vulgarisation of Christianity outraged religious men. During the dark ages the monasteries had become the refuge of learning in the West. When the Arabs established themselves in Spain, ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Aristotle, penetrated Western Europe to inspire scholastic learning and a rationalist theology. The twelveth century saw Western Europe pulsating with a new intellectual life. Ancient Greek philosophy and the Alexandrian science had penetrated Europe through the universities founded in Spain by the Arab conquerors. In the seclusion of the monasteries, many a pro-

foundly pious man of great learning were considering the crucial question whether the absurd dogmas of Christianity should not be thrown in the crucible of reason. Not a few Church dignitaries themselves felt the urge to put religion to the test of reason. So potential and widespread was the resurgence of reason and philosophy that Rome was alarmed. Before long, Pope Hildebrand thought that it was wise to take the rising scholastic learning under Apostolic patronage. One of the founders of scholasticism, Gerbert, rose to the papal throne with the name of Sylvester II. He was a pupil of the Arabs, having gone to study at Cordova.

As a matter of fact, Western Europe felt the impact of resurgent rationalism even earlier than the twelveth century. Already in the nineth century, the German monk Gottschalk questioned the venerable dogma of predestination. A revolt of reason against authority was evidently involved in that controversy. Scotus Erigena also lived at that time. He proposed to combine philosophy with religion, and made a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Plato and Aristotle. Holding that matter was also eternal, coexistent with God, Erigena argued: "Reason is first in nature, and authority in time. For, although nature was created together with time, authority did not begin to exist from the beginning of nature and time. But reason has arisen with nature and time, from the beginning! of things. Reason itself teaches this. For, authority, no doubt, hath proceeded from reason, but reason not by any means from authority. And all authority which is not approved by true reason, turns out to be weak. But true reason, seeing that it stands firm and immutable, protected by its own virtues, needs not. be strengthened by any confirmation of authority."[13]

The Trinitarian doctrine, established by the First Council of Nicea which formulated that mystic cult of trans-substan-

[13] Maurice, *Mediaeval Philosophy.*

tiation, had prevented Christianity to develop as a, purely monotheistic religion. With that dogma challenged, Christianity outgrew the handicap of mysticism. The history of thought had reached a point where mystic religion must join issue with reason. The orthodox ecclesiasts, particularly of Italy, made a desperate attempt to curb the growth of rationalism. In order to rationalise faith, they,took over Erigena's philosophy, mixed it up with Aristotle's metaphysics, and Stoic pantheism, and conferred on the strange concoction the blessings of the Holy Scriptures. That was the rise of scholastic theology. But the subterfuge did not work. The doubt about orthodox religious ideas had spread too far and wide to be so easily silenced. There was a growing demand for orderly thought. The new method of drawing distinction between faith and reason was fascinating. It allowed a considerable margin for rational thought, which thus grew under the stepmotherly patronage of the Church, and particularly in the seclusion of the monasteries.

"The awakening mind of the West was displaying, in an unmistakable way, its propensity to advance..... It became impossible to divert the onward movement, and on the first great question arising—that of the figure and place of the earth—a question dangerous to the last degree, since it inferentially included the determination of the position of man in the Universe, theology suffered an irretrievable defeat. Between her and philosophy, there was thenceforth no other issue than a mortal duel."[14]

From the eleventh century, the University of Paris became the seat of scholastic learning. The historic duel between faith and reason was now fought as the "Realist" and "Nominalist" controversy. Erigena's philosophy was developed by a series of bold thinkers, Roscellinus and

[14] Draper, *Intellectual Development of Europe.*

Peter Abelard being the most prominent. The early Church Fathers had taken over the Platonic doctrine of the "Universals" to give their oriental mysticism a philosophical appearance. Roscellinus was the first to challenge the reality of the "Universals ", characterising them as mere names. He invoked the authority of Aristotle, who had refuted the Platonic doctrine. Orthodox Ecclesiasts were placed in a very awkward position. Because, they had also relied on Aristotle's authority. Roscellinus boldly declared that the Trinity of Christian theology was incompatible with the unity of real existence. He was accused of heresy and died as a martyr to the cause of freedom and progress.

But the spiritual upsurge was irresistible, and orthodoxy had to give in ground, though inch by inch. It received support from the most unexpected quarter. In his effort to combat the heresy of the "Nominalists" of the University of Paris, the cannonised Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, fell back on the double-edged sword of Byzantine logic (of twofold truth) and "consecrated the privilege of reason by showing the harmony between reason and faith."[15] He, of course, conceded to reason only the secondary place, arguing that, to harmonise, two things did not need to be of equal status. But he did admit that all questions about the relation between faith and reason should be submitted to human intellect. The result of all such well-meaning or wilful efforts was to fan the flame of resurgent rationalism. Still for several centuries, it remained more or less under the tutelage of faith, (scholastic philosophy was religious philosophy); but at the same time, it undermined the authority of revealed religion, and blazed the trail of spiritual freedom.

Abelard's famous book, *Sic Et Non*, could be called the Bible of "Nominalism". It stated, though in a circumscribed

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[15] Lewes, *History of Philosophy*.

manner and through suggestion, the basic doctrine of scholastic philosophy. By the ingenious method of pointing out the contradictory opinions of the Church Fathers, Abelard proved that their doctrines were full of fallacies, and therefore could not stand the test of reason and intelligence. He insinuated that there was so much discord and strife on doctrinal matters, because they referred to imaginary things, and everybody imagined them in his own way. In an earlier work, Abelard discussed the doctrines of faith and mysteries of religion without any restraint; nothing was too profound or too secret for his penetrating criticism. He was condemned by the Church not so much for his denial of the Trinity, as for his assertion of the supremacy of reason, which clearly represented a revolt against authority. As .against his appeal to Rome, the lower ecclesiastical court, which had condemned him, argued: "He makes void the whole Christian faith by attempting to comprehend the nature of God through human reason. He ascends up into heaven; he goes down into hell. Nothing can elude him, either in the height above or in the nethermost depths. His branches spread over the whole earth. He boasts that he has disciples in Rome itself, even in the College of Cardinals. He draws the whole earth after him. It is time, therefore, to silence him by Apostolic authority."[16] Abelard escaped the death of the martyr by fleeing to the Islamic kingdom of Spain.

"Nominalism" preached by Roscellinus as early as the close of the eleventh century, was more profound than just the opinion of a schoolman. It was the light of philosophy breaking through the darkness of the Middle Ages. It was scepticism asserting itself against superstition and human authority, which dominated the mediaeval mind. It was an onslaught on the hierarchy of the Church as well as of the

[16] Draper, *Intellectual Development of Europe.*

intellectual world of mystic theology. The birthplace of "Nominalism", the University of Paris, gave birth also to such disruptive doctrines: "There have been many truths, from eternity, which were not God himself."[17] When held up as the author of the doctrine, Jean de Brescain, a teacher in the University, argued that the doctrine was true, "only philosophically, not theologically". This subtle argument-only provoked such outbursts as "the Christian religion prevents us from learning anything more" (than theology); "the only wise men in the world are the philosophers"; "the teachings of the theologians are based upon fables."[18]

The Arab Philosophers are to be thanked for quickening, the intellectual resurgence in Western Europe. While Gins' tian theology had taken over Platonic mysticism with some fragments of Aristotle's logic and metaphysics, the entire volume of the philosophical and scientific thought of ancient Greece was rescued by the Arabs from the ruins of the antique world; it was treasured and elaborated by a brilliant gallaxy of their philosophers. The severe monotheism of Islam made that grand achievement possible. The Almighty God of a monotheistic religion creates the world out of nothing; thereafter, he leaves it alone to go its own way. Interfering with secular affairs, he would come under the purview of the laws of the world, and thus compromise his position. The Hindu doctrine of *karma* could have a similar implication; but Hinduism never became a monotheistic religion. Therefore, Hindu religious doctrines, since the fall of Buddhism, remained entangled in the wilderness of mysticism, and never promoted rationalist thought and secular learning.

Scholastic rationalism developed on the authority of the

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[17] Lewes, *History of Philosophy.*

[18] Maywald, *Die Lehre van Zweifacher Wahrheit, Ein Versuch der Trennung van Theologie und Philosophy im Mittel-alter.*

scientific works of Aristotle. To what a great extent the Arab philosophers contributed to that intellectual movement, can be judged from the well-known saying current in those days: "Nature interpreted by Aristotle, and Aristotle interpreted by Averroes"—the greatest of Arab philosophers. In Averroism culminated the contest between faith and reason, .despotic ignorance and free thought—a contest which had begun in the nineth century, when Erigena counterposed philosophy to theology. Averroes had been preceded by a succession of great thinkers equally bold and brilliant. Only one or two instances may be cited by way of illustration. Al Gazali was an older contemporary of Averroes. He had acquired scepticism from the ancient Greeks, and, having failed to derive satisfaction from religion, he "finally resolved to discard all authority". He declared: "My aim is simply to know the truth of things; consequently, it is indispensable for me to ascertain what is knowledge. Now it was evident to me that certain knowledge must be that which explains the object to be known in such a manner that no doubt can remain, so that in future all error and conjecture respecting it must be impossible. Thus, when I have acknowledged ten to be more than three, if anyone were to say 'on the contrary, three is more than ten, and to prove the truth of my assertion, I will change this rod into a serpent'; and if he were to change it, my conviction of his error would remain unshaken. His manoeuver would only produce in me admiration for his ability. I should not doubt my own knowledge."[19] Al Gazali arrived at the conclusion that no knowledge could possess such mathematical exactness, unless it were acquired by sense perception. In reason he found the judge of the correctness of the sense perceptions.

Abubaker of Andalusia rejected the geocentric view of

[19] Quoted by Lewes in *History of Philosophy.*

Ptolemey three-hundred years before Copernicus. It is recorded that he had worked out "an astronomical system and principle of celestial motions; that in his system all movements were verified; and that no error resulted." A treatise elaborating Abubaker's astronomical theories was written after his death by his pupil Alpetragius. That book prepared the way for the revolutionary discovery of. Copernicus. Abubaker's hypothesis was recognised as an immense contribution to astronomical research, and scholastic scientists, like Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, belonging to different schools, equally relied upon the work of Alpetragius.

Not only in science and philosophy, but in religious, thought also, Europe was influenced by the impact of Arab learning. Owing to the intermingling of a variety of national cultures—Jewish, Assyrian, Persian, Egyptian and Greek— the Muslim world, during the earlier centuries of its history breathed the spirit of cosmopolitanism. So long as peoples live apart, they regard each other's religions as a mass of absurdities. Closer contact breaks down the wall of ignorance, and mutual understanding and respect becomes possible. It stands to the credit of the Arab philosophers that they, for the first time, conceived the idea of a common divine origin of religions as well as that of a law-governed Universe. Having learned from the Assyrians, Egyptian* and Greeks, Arab scientists assiduously cultivated astronomy for centuries. The study of the celestial mechanism logically suggested the idea that the world was a cosmos. That grand idea was not repugnant to a rigidly monotheistic religion with an anthropomorphic God who, by his very nature, could not pervade the whole world so as to interfere with its life whimsically at any time, anywhere and in any manner. A personal God can, according to temperament, only watch or contemplate his creation. The inhabitants of the world come under his jurisdiction only on the Day of

Judgment. Until then, they are free—as free as mortals ever can be.

With a cosmopolitan spirit and the advantage of the most rigorous monotheism, the Arab philosophers made the bold suggestion that all religions represented efforts of the human mind to solve the mysteries of life and nature. They added that the efforts more reconcilable to reason was the greater, nobler and more sublime.

By the twelveth century, there commenced the process of a radical change in the conception of the world. The belief in supernatural agencies began to be shaken by an ever increasing knowledge of nature, and knowledge of nature revealed that it was a law-governed system. The ancient belief in the possibility of science was restored. European intelligence and learning took up the threads of enquiry into the mechanism of nature, broken off on the fall of Alexandria under the blow of Christian bigotry. Dogmatism was challenged by doubts; venerable articles of faith were questioned by reason and intelligence. The Divine Will operating arbitrarily, defying all attempts of explanation or understanding, began to be replaced by invariable laws of nature. Under the impact of knowledge and learning, radiating from the Islamic world, particularly, the universities of Spain, and also impelled by the curiosity and intellectual urge of resurgent Europe, theology rationalised itself, and thus became the solvent of religion. The teleological doctrine of a Providential Will legalised, so to say, the notion of natural laws, and thus made the basic contribution to the resurgence of scientific enquiries. By substituting the anthropomorphic God with the intellectual concept of an impersonal Supreme Being or First Principle or Final Cause, scholastic philosophy tacitly identified the laws of nature with the Providential Will. The former could be deduced from observed facts, and verified experimentally; whereas the latter was no more than a postulate.

Consequently, human intelligence became more attracted to the study of natural laws.

History has honoured Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Albertus Magnus and William Ockham, as the prophets of the spiritual liberation of Europe from the tortuous experience of the dark Middle-Ages. Bacon was the first to grasp clearly that philosophy should be identified with science, and based upon the increasing knowledge of the invariable and universal laws of nature. Thomas Aquinas, who was cannonised by the Church, was a metaphysician of the Aristotelian school. He pressed teleology as against theology. He preached the doctrine that -God had granted nature a certain measure of autonomy; in other words, nature had laws of her own, which operated independently of any supernatural interference. Therefore, together with Albertus Magnus, he advocated that philosophy and the knowledge of nature should no longer be under the tutelage of religion. As against Augustin, the most illustrious of the early Church Fathers, who had held that knowledge was the result of divine illumination, Aquinas referred knowledge to sense perceptions. Duns Scotus shocked the world of his time by boldly posing the tendentious question—"Can matter think?" Albertus Magnus, the prince among the scholastic philosophers, demonstrated the operation of natural laws, and therefore was denounced by the Church and feared by the ignorant people as a sorcerer and magician. He drew a clear line of demarcation between natural knowledge and theological knowledge. Finally, Ockham was an out-and-out free thinker. With little ambiguity, he separated questions of philosophy from the questions of faith, and sternly kept the latter away from interfering with reason. He even went further to express doubt about the teleological view of the Universe. He declared: "In the question of divine intelligence, being the first efficient cause of all that exists, as a philosopher, I know

nothing about it, experience not instructing us in what way the cause of causes operates, and reason having neither the power nor the right to penetrate the divine sanctuary."

The idea that the world was not a standing miracle, but a law-governed system thus resulted from the rationalist Christian theology and scholastic learning. The concept of law at that time was largely teleological; it was conceived as the operation of the Will of God. But reason having reasserted itself, the operation of the divine laws of nature was no longer a matter of blind faith. Growing curiosity to understand how the laws of nature operated, was indeed still frowned upon by religion; but it could no longer be altogether suppressed. That curiosity promoted the rise of modern science.

The thousand years from Constantin to Columbus were not an intellectual void. The intellectual resurgence at the close of the Middles-Ages cannot be directly connected with the rise of the bourgeoisie. Its root can be traced, as has been done in outlines in this chapter, through the movement of ideas taking place long before the appearance of the bourgeoisie to struggle against the Lords temporal and spiritual, who amongst themselves dominated the economic life of Europe. The economic life of Europe was stagnant; but the movement of ideas was not suspended. On the contrary, the spread of Christianity was a powerful movement of ideas, which brought the barbarian hordes within the orbit of the coming civilisation. The rise and radiation of Islam also took place during that period of economic stagnation. Yet, human history records no greater dramatic adventure of ideas. Padua was situated near Venice; but Paris was the capital of a barbarian feudal kingdom. And the subversive doctrines radiated from there. Giordano Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and even Descartes were all born and brought up in the atmosphere of rationalist Christian theology, which conceived, albeit teleologically, the grand idea of a law-governed

Universe. Their relation with Euclid, Archimedes, Hipparchos, Aristarchos and other scientists of Alexandria, who lived thousand years previously, can be more convincingly proved than with Vasco-da-Gama's circumnavigation of the world, Columbus' discovery of the New World, or the opening of trade routes to the East. There is no causal connection between the rise of modern science and philosophy and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Science and philosophy developed as the result of man's age-long quest for freedom and search for truth. The bourgeoisie, later on, patronised them because they served their purpose. The relation was accidental, not causal.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVOLT OF MAN

THE characteristic feature of modern civilisation is the progressive triumph of science over superstition, reason over faith. The struggle had been going on ever since the dawn of history. Even during the dark Middle-Ages, when scientific knowledge acquired by the ancient Greeks was nearly forgotten, rationalism asserted itself in the form of the scholastic Christian theology which conceived the grand idea of a law-governed Universe, and thus prepared the ground for a revival of science. "The most profound and penetrating of the causes that have transformed society is a mediaeval inheritance."[1]

But the teleological order of the Middle Ages was like the orderliness of a prison house: the world, indeed, was not a standing miracle; but everything in it was predetermined by a divine Providence, and all terrestrial affairs were to be governed by the ecclesiastical authority. The revolt against that authority, therefore, was the precondition not only for man regaining the freedom of thought, will and action, but even to be able to hear "the audible voice of God ", which was his own conscience.

The revolt of man known as the Renaissance heralded the modern civilisation. It took place over a period of two-hundred years from the middle of the fourteenth to that of the sixteenth century. As a matter of fact, it was a much longer process. The revival of science began a century earlier, with Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus. They, on their part, had been inspired by the Arabian scholars who had kept the fire of scientific research burning while Europe

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[1] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*

was merged in the darkness of ignorance during the four hundred years between the conquest of Rome by Genseric and the restoration of the Western Empire by Charlemagne.

The revival of science, however, was not the specific significance of the Renaissance. It created an intellectual atmosphere in which the germs of scientific knowledge could again fructify. A mechanistic cosmology had to shake the faith in a teleological order before the grand conception of a law-governed Universe could give birth to modern science. The ecclesiastical authority had to be challenged so that man could remember that God had created him after his own image, and consequently hear the voice of God in his own conscience and realise the almightiness of God in man's sovereignty, dignity and creativeness. Created after the image of God, man was destined to be godlike. "The rejection of ecclesiastical authority, which is the negative characteristic of the modern age, begins earlier than the positive characteristic, which is the acceptance of scientific authority."[2]

Ptolemy's *Almagest* was rescued by Harun-Al-Rashid in 800 A.D. Since then it was revised by a succession of Arab scientists. The new scientific knowledge reached Europe centuries before Copernicus published his epoch-making work. Yet, the knowledge remained in possession of cloistered individuals who, in deference to the ecclesiastical authority, dared speak only in a subdued voice and an equivocal language. Three hundred years separated Copernicus from Roger Bacon. During that period, the intellectual life of Europe liberated itself from the ecclesiastical authority. That was the period of Renaissance. A successful struggle for spiritual freedom created an intellectual atmosphere congenial for the revival of science. Heliocentrism laid the

[2] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*.

foundation of a mechanistic cosmology and caused a profound change in the intellectual outlook of Europe.

"With a sharp gesture of impatience, Europe turned away from the vast literature of commentaries and glosses which the pedants of the Middle Ages had inscribed in letters of opium on tablets of lead. Insensibly, mankind acquired a new attitude towards knowledge itself. Authority no longer went unchallenged. The past was no longer supreme. As the planet unfolded its unending wonders, generations grew up for whom truth was not a complete thing already given in ancient books, but a secret yet to be retrieved from the womb of time."[3]

It has been said that the discovery of the new world enabled Europe to come out of the dark Middle Ages. The consequence of the discovery of the Heaven by Copernicus was much more revolutionary and far-reaching; and that great revolution, perhaps the greatest of all times, resulted from yet another great discovery—the discovery of the antiquity. That great discovery was made during the hundred and fifty years between Petrarch and Erasmus by a brilliant gallaxy of poets, painters, critics, essayists, historians and philosophers, who called themselves Humanists. Standard-bearers of the revolt of man against the tyranny of the terrestrial agents of God, if not always against God himself, they appealed to the tradition of the pagan antiquity. For them, the world appeared "no longer as a vale or tears, a place of painful pilgrimage to another world, but as affording opportunities for pagan delights, for fame and beauty and adventure. The long centuries of asceticism were forgotten in a riot of art, poetry and pleasure."[4]

The neo-Platonic doctrine of the *logos* was taken over by the Greek Fathers of the Church as the philosophical

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[3] H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Modern Europe.* [4] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

foundation of Christian theology. But the biblical dogma of creation, most probably interpolated subsequently, could not be reconciled with Plato's view in that respect. Not only Plato, but the Greeks generally, held that creation out of nothing was impossible. They conceived creation as an artifice or architectural feat of God. The substance out of which God created the world was given—as eternal as God himself. St. Augustin disowned the Platonist tradition of Christian theology, and shifted it on to the foundation of pure (blind) faith buttressed on the authority of Aristotle. The ideological view elaborated by scholastic rationalism reduced man to the helpless position of a mere cog in the vast wheel of the law-governed Universe.

The men of the Renaissance revolted against that degradation. They turned to the Platonic and Epicurean views of life. Believing that the conscience of man was the voice of God, they claimed freedom of acting according to their conscience; and, as any action presupposed the will to act, they also proclaimed freedom of the will. If man was the noblest creation of God, godliness was inherent in him; he was free to will, act, create, and enjoy the beauties of his creation. "A new type of man began with Petrarca, men accustomed to introspection, who selected their own ideals, and moulded their minds to them. The mediaeval system could prepare them for death; but seeing the vicissitudes of fortune and the difficulties of life, they depended on the intellectual treasures of the ancient world, on the whole mass of accessible wisdom, to develop themselves all ronud."[5]

But it was neither an uncritical revivalism nor slavish imitation. Petrarch devised the method rediscovering a world long hidden behind a thick veil of fanciful legends and allegories. The classics had to be interpreted by reason

[5] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*

freed from the fetters of scholastic logic and ecclesiastical learning. So interpreted, the culture of the antiquity was a display of human dignity and of human reason in an atmosphere of intellectual and moral freedom. Humanism of the Renaissance thus was inspired by "those elements of spiritual freedom and intellectual culture without which the civilisation of the modern world would be impossible. The study of Greek implied the birth of criticism, comparison, research. Systems based on ignorance and superstition were destroyed to give way before it. The study of Greek opened philosophical horizons far beyond the dream world of the Churchmen and the monks; it stimulated the germs of science, suggested new astronomical hypotheses and indirectly led to the discovery of America. The study of Greek resuscitated a sense of the beautiful in art and literature."[6]

The significance of the Renaissance has been differently assessed by various historians. Voltaire described it as the "bright light of liberated reason which shone in contrast with the era of priestly tyranny". He represented the view of the eighteenth century rationalists, who traced their descent from the Renaissance—of the antiquity, of literature, of art, of humanism. Michelet, who first used the term Renaissance, together with Hallam, also held that Renaissance was a reassertion of classical rationalism as against the ecclesiastical orthodoxy, religious philosophy and Gothic art of the Middle Ages. The Renaissance continued to be the source of the inspiration of European culture until the reaction after the French Revolution advocated a catholic revival.

Another view traces the roots of the Renaissance to the Franciscan religious revival. According to it, the distinctive features of the Renaissance culture—individualism and crea-

[6] J. A. Symonds, *The History of the Renaissance.*

tive spirit originated in the mysticism of the Middle Ages. While some belonging to this school went to the extent of claiming that the Renaissance was the outcome of the mediaeval Germanic culture, further research led to the conclusion that an intellectual ferment had been going on ever since the tenth century. The intellectual development of Europe was not completely interrupted during the Middle Ages; there was a continuity ever since the dawn of civilisation.

Burckhardt's *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* published in 1860, since when the positive elements of the mediaeval Christian culture have been more fully appreciated, still remains the standard work on the subject. He describes the Renaissance as a general awakening and rebirth of intellect and human personality; the traditions of scholastic learning with supernatural sanction was rejected in favour of a return to the pre-Christian pagan ways of rationalist and scientific thinking. "By the side of the Church, which had hitherto held the countries of the West together, there arose a new spiritual influence which became the breath of life for all the more instructed minds in Europe..... The logical notion of humanity was old enough—but here the notion became a fact."[7]

Throughout the Middle Ages, learning remained confined to cloisters and schools under the patronage of the Church. The men of the Renaissance challenged that spiritual monopoly. The humanists claimed not only to have an independent judgment based on classical learning, but a free and rational understanding of the religious traditions also. One of the more impetuous among them, Pico della Mirandola, for instance, exclaimed:

"God made man at the close of the creation, to know the laws of the Universe, to love its beauty, to admire its

[7] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

greatness. He bound him to no fixed place, to no prescribed form of work, and by no iron necessity, but gave him freedom to will and to move. ' I have set thee free', says the Creator to Adam, ' in the midst of the world that thou mayest the more easily behold and see that all is therein. I created thee a being neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, only that thou mayest be free to shape and overcome thyself. Thou mayest sink into a beast, and be born anew to the divine likeness. To thee alone is given a growth and a development depending on thy free will Thou bearest in thee the germs of a universal life." [8]

The significance of the Renaissance undoubtedly was profoundly revolutionary; but it was a revolution in the realm of ideas and values, which destroyed the moral sanction of the feudal order, and consequently prepared the ground for the social and political upheavals of the following centuries. From the fact that the Renaissance approximately synchronised with the rise of the trading class, it is deduced that individualism and humanism were principles of the ideology of the bourgeoisie. Historically, that is not true. The Renaissance was a humanist *revival* it invoked the humanist tradition of the pagan culture of the Greco-Roman antiquity. Individualism is an equally ancient principle of libertarian thought. The Renaissance declared the dignity and sovereignty of the individual on the authority of the Sophists, Epicureans, Stoics and also of early Christianity. A careful study of the economic conditions of the early Middle Ages shows that there was no causal connection between the rise of the trading class and the Renaissance; that humanist individualism was not a mere superstructure, nor a justification, of any particular economic system.

[8] *Discourse on the Dignity of Man.*

The four hundred years from the conquest of Rome in the middle of the fifth century by the barbarians under Genseric, and the rise of Charlemagne in the nineth century, could be called the Dark Age, when Europe was sunk into an intellectual coma. The fall of the Roman Empire of the West was soon followed by the dramatic rise of the Islamic power which, having mastered the Mediterranean, conquered Spain. At the same time, the Norman raiders blockaded the northern and western coasts of the continent. The cumulative result of those events was that, by the nineth century, completely landlocked Europe relapsed into agrarian economy. Since the days of the Phoenicians, the Mediterranean had been the great artery of European trade. With the Arabs sitting astride that ancient channel of traffic, the commercial activity of Europe necessarily declined. "The interruption of commerce brought about the disappearance of the merchants, and urban life collapsed."[9]

It is generally believed that the situation remained completely static until the first crusade at the end of the eleventh century. The whole of the Mediterranean Sea was indeed not open for European trade until then. But even after its main basin had come under the domination of the Arabs, the 'Byzantine fleet managed to keep the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas open for a limited traffic with the Italian coast. Venetian traders under the protection of the Byzantine Empire, which until then had resisted the Islamic power, resumed traffic even with Africa and Syria by the end of the nineth century. The merchants of Pisa and Genoa also continued the struggle with the Arabs for the control of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Early in the eleventh century, the Genoese seized Sardinia, and a Pisan fleet defeated the Arabs in the Strait of Messina. In the middle of the century, the Pisans entered the port of Palermo, while the Genoese appeared on the African coast.

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[9]Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Mediaeval Europe.*

If the Italian traders could not be kept out of the Mediterranean for long, the blockade of the northern coast was .also broken soon enough. By the end of the nineth century, there "we find a maritime and commercial activity which is in striking contrast with the agricultural economy of the continent ..... The Vikings were pirates, and piracy is the first

stage of commerce. So true is this that from the end of the nineth century, when their raids ceased, they simply became merchants."[10] On the other hand, the Swedes moved eastwards, and following the trade route along which ancient Greek merchants used to carry amber from the Baltic, they reached the Black Sea by the Middle of the nineth century. There developed a brisk trade in furs and honey as well as slaves. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Baltic arid the North Sea became the scene of busy commercial navigation. Numerous trading posts were established along the coast line between the mouths of the Vistula and the Elbe. The port of Hamburg was one of them. From those ports, Danish ships traded with Britain. The discovery of old English, Flemish and German coins in the basin of the Baltic proves that at the time of King Canute (first half of the eleventh century) there were trade relations between the mouths of the Thames and the Rhine to the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia.

In the twelveth century, Flanders and Brabent were the most prosperous industrial countries of Europe. As a centre of trade, Bruges outshined all other towns of the time, and came to be called "the Venice of the North". Pirenne, however, is of the opinion that it was "a misnomer, for Venice never enjoyed the international importance which made the Flemish port unique". The trade between Flanders and Italy was carried overland until the fourteenth century, when Genoa and Venice established direct maritime

[10] Pirenne, *Ib.*

relations with Bruges. Even during the dark Middle Ages, there must have been a trading class in landlocked Europe to act as the middlemen between Flanders and Italy. The Hansa towns were prosperous trade centres; the Hanseatic League was a powerful commercial combine, which dominated the political life of those towns and their nighbour-hoods. The commercial middle class of Germany colonised the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic before the Teutonic Knights conquered those Slav countries. As early as the middle of the twelveth century, the Hansa League was the medium for the exchange of goods between the steel yards of London and the fairs of Nijninovgorod.

"The volume of mediaeval commerce corresponded to-an economic activity whose magnitude is sufficiently vouched for by the ports such as Venice, Genoa, Bruges, by the Italian colonies in the Levant, by the shipping of the Hanseatic towns, and by the development of the Champagne fairs. Economists who have asseverated the insignificance of mediaeval commerce have pleaded in support of their argument the absence of a class of capitalist merchants in Europe previous to the Renaissance. They may be disposed to make an exception in favour of a few Italian firms, but it is the exception that proves the rule..... Numbers of retail dealers were to be found among the petite bourgeoisie of the towns, but it would be fantastic to reduce the exporters and bankers to their level. Only those who are completely blinded to reality by a pre-conceived theory can deny the importance and influence of commercial capitalism from the beginning of the economic Renaissance..... Mediaeval sources place the existence of capitalism in the twelveth century beyond a doubt."[11]

A certain amount of commercial activity had been going on in the South as well as in the North even during the

[11] Pirenne, Ib.

previous two centuries. "By the beginning of the twelveth century, the trade and industry of Western Europe had sufficiently recovered from the interruption caused by the Saracens. The great historic cities of the Roman Empire, whose population had been depleted through the destruction of sea-borne commerce, began to recover something of their former numbers and affluence. Villages grew into walled towns. Suburbs of merchants and craftsmen spread themselves around the castle or borough. The merchants and craftsmen organised themselves in guilds and began to demand conditions under which money could be safely made. In broad outline, they claimed to be permitted to compound for their own farm or taxes, to be permitted to make their own by-laws, to have their civil suits tried in their own courts and within their own walls, to be able to select their own officers, and that serfs resident for a year and a day within a town or a borough should be regarded as free."[12]

That is a picture of the rise of the bourgeoisie, which is said to be the social basis of the Renaissance—its economic motive force. The phenomenon was not limited to Italy; the whole of Western Europe was entering the period of a great social upheaval—the so-called bourgeois revolution. The trading class had entered the field of industrial production outside Italy. Flanders and Brabant were economically the most advanced countries of Europe. Yet, Italy had the privilege of producing what is called the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie. The Renaissance culture flowered there; Italy was the scene of the historic revolt of man against God and his agents on earth, while "in the rest of Europe religion remained, till a much later period, something given from without, and in practical life egoism and sensuality alternated with devotion and repentence."[13]

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[12] Fisher, *History of Modern Europe,*

[13] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

The spirit of the Renaissance was exactly contrary to the hyprocritical piety and sanctimonious cant that characterised the cultural atmosphere of the other European countries. The spirit breathed by "these intellectual giants, these representatives of the Renaissance, show in respect of religion, a quality which is common to youthful natures. Distinguishing keenly between good and evil, they yet are conscious of no sin. Every disturbance of their inward harmony they feel themselves able to make good out of the plastic resources of their own nature, and therefore they feel no repentance. The need of salvation thus becomes felt more and more dimly, while the ambitious and the intellectual activity of the present either shut out altogether every thought of a world to come or else cause it to assume a poetic instead of a dogmatic form."[14]

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Evidently, there was no causal connection between the Renaissance and the rise of the bourgeoisie. It is true that Florence, a centre of trade and banking, was the home of the artistic aspect of the Renaissance culture. But the Medicis belonged rather to the mediaeval aristocracy than to the rising bourgeoisie. They were too closely connected with the Vatican to desire the dissolution of the established order, to which they themselves also belonged. Genoa and Venice were more bourgeois; and their contribution to the Renaissance was not much. Venice was the typical home of vulgar materialism. Its rulers pursued the objects of enjoying life, in the carnal sense, of creating the most lucrative luxury industries and of carrying on maritime trade to make money and more money. In cultural history, the mediaeval republic of the Doges did not occupy a place of honour. In the creation of aesthetic values, it did not stand in the front rank,

[14] Burckhardt, Ib.

"Literary impulse in general was here wanting, and specially that enthusiasm for classical antiquity."[15]

Nor did Venice contribute anything to original thinking, and literature received but indifferent patronage there. Not until the sixteenth century did Venice recognise the value of Petrarch's poetical works. But by that time, much of his works left as a legacy to Venice had been lost owing to negligence. Indeed, until the latter half of the fifteenth century, humanist culture was but inadequately represented in the republic of the merchant princes. There was nothing original in Venetian culture. Not one of the great men of the Renaissance was a native of that mercantile city. "The aptitude of the Venetians for philosophy and eloquence was in itself not less remarkable than commerce and politics; but this aptitude was neither developed in themselves nor rewarded in strangers, as it was elsewhere in Italy."[15] There was a general intellectual backwardness in the first bourgeois republic, compared to the other parts of Italy under despotic rulers. And the Church was not responsible for that deplorable state of things. In Venice, the clergy was completely under the government; yet the barbarous belief in the relics of the Saints prevailed. The State had a markedly theocratic complexion. The Doge was vested with a semi-clerical status.

On the other hand, the feudal tyrants of Southern Italy were the first to patronise the men of the Renaissance; and later on not a few of the great humanists were graced with the benediction of the Pope. At least two of them actually ascended the holy throne, and there was a succession of "Renaissance Popes."

Apart from Emperor Frederic II, the most remarkable figure of the Middle Ages, Alfonso of Aragon, who became

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[15] Burckhardt, *Ib.*

[16] Sabellico.

the king of Naples, was a promoter of the Renaissance. In addition to George of Trebizond and several other Greek scholars, Lorenzo Valla, together with several other humanists, resided in the court of Naples. They were all paid handsomely. Yet, the king used to remark: "It is not given to pay you, for your work would not be paid for if I gave you the fairest of my cities; but in time I hope to satisfy you." While appointing Giannozzo Manetti as his secretary, Alfonso said: "My last crust I shall share with you." When it appeared that Alfonso might become the king ot Italy, Aeneas Sylvius, one of the early humanists, who later became Pope, wrote: "I had rather that Italy attained peace under his rule than under that of the free cities." Federigo, the Duke of Urbino, himself a great scholar and student of science, was another princely patron of the Renaissance. He was fully conversant with the entire scientific knowledge of the time and desired its practical application. Some of the Sforzas, Francesco and Ludovico particularly, also took keen interest in intellectual matters, and had their children educated in humanist culture.

The Renaissance was a phase of man's age-long struggle for freedom, and freedom is an ideal concept. It was *A* chapter in the cultural history of mankind, which had its own logic and own momentum. The Renaissance was inspired more by the humanist, rationalist and scientific ideas of the ancient Greek civilisation than by the economic interests and political ambition of the mediaeval trading class.

Rationalism and the spirit of enquiry had been penetrating the seats of learning of Europe ever since the eleventh century. The modest beginning under the reign of Charlemagne led to the rise of the Paris University which, by the beginning of the twelfth century, became the scene of the great controversy between Realism and Nominalism. That controversy was the manifestation of an intellectual ferment which disturbed the palcidity of religious orthodoxy and

ecclesiastical bigotry. Famous Nominalists like Roscellinus, Abelard, Anselm and Occam, were the pioneers of Renaissance Humanism. Abelard was actually condemned by the Church as an heretic. His pupil, Arnold of Brescia, was the first to raise the standard of revolt in Rome. Those men all belonged to the clergy and lived in the atmosphere of theological learning. They did not have the remotest connection with the bourgeoisie, which was still to rise—two hundred years later. The University of Oxford was founded at the end of the twelfth century by a group of scholastics who had studied in Paris. In quick succession, numerous similar seats of learning sprang up in France, Italy and England. "They were the result of a spontaneous popular movement carried out under the shelter and direction of the Church."[17] Disruptive ideas to blossom in the Renaissance were incubated in the mediaeval seats of learning.

Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon lived early in the thirteenth century. The one is known in history as "great in magic, greater in philosophy and greatest in theology", while the other, as the "admirable doctor " who ushered in the age of reason and revival of science. Bacon also was accused of magical practices. Demonstration of scientific knowledge was in those days confounded with magical power. Albertus Magnus was great in magic because he made not only chemical experiments (then called alchemy), but also observed botanical phenomena in hothouses. His treatise on plants was the best work on natural history written since Aristotle and until the Renaissance.[18]

Of the two basic ideas of original Christianity, that of man was completely eclipsed by that of God during the early Middle Ages, when the minds of the few educated men were absorbed in theology. The current of European culture was

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[17] Fisher, *History of Modern Europe.*

[18] See Charles Singer, *From Magic to Science.*

fed by three different streams of thought,—Greek philosophy, the tradition of the Roman Empire, and Christian religion. After the fall of Rome, Christianity, which was the newest, became the predominating factor. The renaissance of the European mind, after several centuries, as evidenced by the rise of scholastic learning, represented resurrection of the pagan tradition of Rome. Scholastic learning celebrated the dignity of human reason. The second basic idea of original Christianity—that of man, his relation to God—began to emerge out of the thick mist of theological mysticism. Even during the earlier centuries, the Latin learning of the schoolmen revived the memory of Virgil and Cicero, who represented the spirit of ancient Humanism. But the cultural tradition of the Roman Empire, after all, was a reflection of the greatness of Greece. The European mind, therefore, had to go-back to that fountain-head to draw inspiration for a new spirit of creativity. Ancient Greek learning had culminated, on the one hand, in the scientific achievements of the Alexandrian period and, on the other, in the ethical ideas of the Epicureans and the Stoics. This, latter current flowed into the tradition of pagan Rome.

Epicures divided philosophy into physics and ethics, and subordinated the former to the latter, although Epicurean physics provided a metaphysical sanction for the freedom of the individual. His ethics was humanist; his philosophy was the art of enjoying life; it had no concern for death or the power of the Gods whom he called the product of delusion; it was indifferent to the future, because there was nothing after death, the soul being a congerie of atoms which dissolved into its constituents.

Notwithstanding their mysticism, the Stoics developed ethical ideas which were also humanist. They taught: Live according to reason; since the world is composed of matter and God, who is the reason of the world, live in harmony with nature; as reason is supreme in nature, it ought to be

so in man. Our existence should be intellectual, and all bodily pains and pleasures should be despised. A harmony between the human will and universal reason constitutes virtue.

Both the currents of ancient Greek thought reached Italy—Stoic and Epicurean philosophy directly, the rationalism and scientific knowledge through the Arabs. Therefore, the renaissance of the European mind attained the climax there. While in the rest of Europe it remained a smouldering fire, breaking out in flames here and there, in the form of the heretical movement, and finally stultifying itself in Lutheran neo-dogmatism and Calvinist philistinism, which resulted from the Reformation.

The teachings of the great rationalist scholastics, who invoked the humanist spirit of early Christianity as also of the culture of pagan Rome, created a stir throughout the world of Latin Christianity. There was a growing demand for a reform of the Church, moderation of the ecclesiastical authority and liberalising of the dogmatic orthodoxy. The demand expressed itself in the heretical movements which, originating in the south of France (Languedoc) under the impact of Islam in Spain, spread from England to Bohemia. Wyclif, Huss, Jerome, Arnold of Brescia and others, accused of heresy, and many martyred on that charge, heralded the final triumph of the Renaissance in Italy. The establishment of the mendicant orders with the object of suppressing the heretical movement destroyed the faith in the possibility of reforming the Church.

Originally, Christianity represented the revolt of man against the tyranny of the Jewish God and despotism of imperial Rome. The Sermon on the Mount contained the highest moral ideals ever conceived by human imagination. Christianity was to establish in the world a moral order as conceived by the Greek Sages. The belief was confirmed by the early Church Fathers adopting Platonic theology and

Stoic philosophy. For nearly a thousand years, Christianity satisfied the spiritual need of its devotees and the Church was the refuge of learning and culture.

Eventually, ecclesiastical Christianity belied all the promise. Natural religion had convinced man that the Gods were constantly looking after his affairs; Christian monotheism could not carry that comforting conviction. The ways of its God were believed to be mysterious. Under neo-Platonic influence, in the early Middle Ages, Christianity took over a good deal of oriental mysticism. But the ordinary religious man felt the need of the protection of some anthropomorphic supernatural power. To satisfy that need, Christianity, having abandoned its original simplicity and taken over a heavy ballast of mysticism, had to develop an elaborate theology to explain the ways of God so as to prove that he was actively interested in the affairs of man. The parallel development was the rise of a priesthood as the intermediary between man and his God. The institution of the seven sacraments embraced all the important events of the life of the faithful, and completely subordinated him to the priest, who alone was authorised to perform the mystic ritual. Finally, Thomas Aquinas expounded the doctrine that the power over the soul of man had been conferred on the priest by divine ordinance: The priest was entitled "to make the body of Christ, to act in the person of Christ." The elevation of the Pope to a superhuman and supernatural position was the logical consequence of the mystification of Christianity and the rise of an all-powerful priesthood.

An almost godly character and position were conferred upon the High Priest, who had originally been only the Bishop of Rome. It was assumed on the authority of patristic Scriptures that the Pope occupied the place of Christ in the mystical body of the Church, which embraced heaven, earth, the dead and the living. Original Christianity had promised man salvation; ecclesiasticism and the spiritual

domination of the priesthood meant death for man. The rebirth was a return to paganism.

Describing the degeneration of the Church, Burckhardt writes: "Safe in the sense of her inviolability, she abandoned herself to the most scandalous profligacy. She levelled mortal blows against conscience and intellect, and drove multitudes of the noblest spirits whom she had inwardly estranged into the arms of unbelief and despair." The Renaissance was the result of that inward estrangement. Despair turned man's eyes to paganism. To enjoy life heartily was the spirit of the Renaissance. It was maintained that the world was destined to happiness as against the Christian view of its misery and early destruction. Renaissance Humanism rose in revolt against the Christian culture of the Middle Ages. It was a new way of life, which looked for inspiration to the other side of the pious centuries of vain theological disputations, papal tyranny and priestly profligacy.

The priest was the herd of the Christian soul. The man of the Renaissance refused to be herded, and dared take his soul in his own care. Christianity had taught man that the springs, mountains, woods, were the home of evil spirits. The man of the Renaissance shook off the fear of demonical powers. Passionate love of nature, appreciation of her beauties was the most powerful expression of the revolt of man. The spirit of the new culture was expressed vividly in the early Latin poems of the "Clerici Vagantes", who had inherited the secular and sacrilegious tradition of the Languedoc poets. Referring to those early Latin poems, composed mostly by unknown and obscure clergymen, Bruckhardt writes: "A frank enjoyment of life and its pleasures, as whose patrons the gods of heathendom are invoked, while Catos and Scipios hold the place of the saints and heroes of Christianity, flows in full current through the rhymed verses. These Latin poems of the twelfth century with all their remarkable frivolity are doubtless a product in which the whole of

Europe had a share. Here is a reproduction of the whole ancient view of life—the same unstable existence, the same free and more than free views of life, and the germs at all events of the same pagan tendencies in their poetry."

Given the background of that tradition of spiritual revolt and emotional abandon, the Renaissance was naturally remarkable for its passionate worship of beauty and partiality for the joy of life. "It was the aesthetic against the ascetic ", as Lord Acton has described the spirit of the time. All historians notwithstanding differences of opinion in other respects, marvel at the Renaissance art. At the same time. Humanism has been criticised for its indifferent, callous, negative attitude towards morality. To challenge human judgment by boldly posing in practice the problem of the relation between ethics and aesthetics, was an outstanding feature of the Renaissance culture. It was, however, not a new problem, arbitrarily created by the wantonness of the men of lax morality. The problem is as old as philosophy, and therefore can be traced all the way back to the dawn of the history of human culture. The Greeks were very much concerned with it, and offered several solutions—Platonic, Pericletan, Epicurean, Stoic. On the basis of the experience of the millennium of Christian culture, the problem arose again in the context of the atmosphere of a general spiritual crisis. Reacting to that crisis, the Renaissance Humanists had to face the problem courageously. Their approach was practical. They did not theorise about the relation between ethics and aesthetics; they lived a life which indicated a solution of the old problem. It confronted them in a somewhat different form, as the conflict between asceticism and aesthetics.

Mediaeval Christian culture, with the sanction of the Stoic tradition, had identified virtue with asceticism. The world was regarded as a vale of tears, everything in it sinful. The more one resisted the temptation of life, the nearer he

came to God, and the greater was the chance of salvation. Such a view of life naturally killed all incentive for man to live as man. The ideal was approximation to saintliness, and as that ideal could not be attained, or even honestly pursued, by the average run of mortal man, virtue became the veil for hypocrisy. Apparently cherishing the sublime ideal of divine truth, in practice, the pious Christian lived a life of lies. The world was populated by pseudo-saints and sanctimonious censors of everything natural, everything human. If the entire Christian world was not to be converted into a menagerie of maniacs, trying sincerely or fraudulently to be saints or angels, or a vast laboratory for experiments with untruth and hypocrisy, a revolt against what passed as virtue and morality was the urgent need of the moment. Even a sanctimonious Protestant historian had to admit it subsequently. "I know not whether any man of sound understanding—any man, not led astray by some fantom, can seriously wish that this state of things had remained unshaken and unchanged in Europe; whether any man persuades himself that the will and power to look the genuine entire and unveiled truth steadily in the face could ever have been nurtured under such influences. Nor do I understand how any one could really regard the diffusion of this most singular condition of human mind as conducive to the welfare and happiness of the human race."[19]

Humanism rose as the response to that spiritual crisis. The supernaturalism of the mediaeval Christian culture was opposed with naturalism. If God had made man after his own image, the flesh could not be impure, its desires could not be sinful, and to satisfy them could not be immoral. Humanism was neither immoral nor amoral. It rejected the morality which identified virtue with asceticism, which would kill humanness for the sake of a vain quest for saintliness.

[19] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

A new standard of morality was set up; it was naturalism: man being a part of nature, to enjoy the gifts of nature, according to her laws, was virtuous; to act otherwise, was vice. The relation between aesthetics and that naturalist conception of ethics is evident. By offering a practical solution of an old problem of cultural history, Renaissance Humanism promoted such a riotous development of art.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his now famous *Notebook:* "I have always sought for first principles, as to how nature works in herself, and how I may approach her, how the eye knows the variety of things, how our visual power works, how visual images came about, and in what manner the theory of sculpture and painting should be framed."[20]

Scientific observation of nature was the foundation of the Renaissance art. Jt was not consistent with Christian ethics which identified virtue with asceticism—the vain attempt to suppress natural desires. One could not obey the law of nature, enjoy her beauties, reproduce in works of art his emotional response to those beauties, unless he realised that he was a part of nature, as such subject to her laws, and that the experience of the joy of life qualified him to enjoy the beauties of nature. With the Humanists, art thus became an emblem of moral truth. "It was conceived as an allegory, a figurative expression which under its sensuous form concealed an ethical sense."[21] Renaissance art was not a mere imitation of nature, but discovery of reality which, for Humanism, was the moral truth.

That is quite evident from its development; and the moral significance of the Humanist aesthetics cannot be fully grasped unless the process of its evolution is carefully followed. The earlier Renaissance artists were mostly friars; Dante himself was rather a representative of mediaeval

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[20] E. McCurdy, *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci.*

[21] Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man.*

supernaturalism than of the dawning Humanist naturalism. Yet, just as Beatrice was more of a woman of flesh and blood, belonging to this "vale of tears", than a mere divine apparition, just so did the religious subjects of the paintings of the early Renaissance artists gradually come closer to the flesh and blood of human life, until we reach Titian's Madonna, who was so very far from the idealised Holy Mother of the Christian ascetic conception, not to mention Leonardo's Mona Lisa with the bewitching, if hot wicked, smile.

In his treatise on painting. Leonardo writes that the artist must amalgamate his mind with the mind of nature, because only then he could imagine the purpose, gauge the emotion behind every movement of the subject. Naturalism, the refusal to assume any transcendental mystery behind nature thus was the inspiration of Renaissance art; and naturalism was an ethical attitude inasmuch as it rejected asceticism as the measure of virtue. "The self-assertion of the Humanists was open and unashamed; man was to train himself like a race horse, to cultivate himself like a flower, that he might arrive soul and body to such perfection as morality might covet."[22]

The Renaissance Humanists were not indifferent to morality; but they refused to practise vice as virtue; they set up a new standard of ethics and created new moral values in their works of art. Nevertheless, to the superficial student, the early Humanist attitude towards ethical problems does appear to be negative. They rejected old standards, which claimed supernatural sanction; but they did not discover any alternative sanction for morality. Until morality found a secular sanction, it could not be divorced from religion or some sort of transcendentalism, without creating an ethical chaos. Humanism did create the impression of such a moral chaos, although the Renaissance art suggested the theory

[23] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Some Authors.*

of a spontaneous secular morality, which could be elaborated only on the basis of the subsequently acquired biological knowledge. In this respect also, the genius of Leonardo anticipated future intellectual development by three hundred years. He wrote that nature was not only governed by law, but the laws could be discovered by man, and they operated in each higher organism as "the rule of mind."

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Why did the intellectual awakening noticeable throughout Western Europe ever since the eleventh century reach the climax in Italy? The question becomes all the more puzzling when it is noted that during the two hundred years (1350-1550) when "Italy produced an output of art, scholarship and literature such as the world had not seen since the glory of ancient Athens,"[23] the rest of Europe appeared to relapse into slumber. The fifteenth century was intellectually barren, not only in England, but in France also. Germany was still struggling out of her barbarian past. The question has occupied the mind of historians, and different answers have been suggested.

One fact, however, has not been sufficiently noted. During those two hundred years, which may be characterised as the Golden Age of European culture, national States were rising and consolidating themselves in Western Europe, while Italy was in a state of political disorder. That fact seems to throw light on the relation between culture and nationalism. It is true that the Italian Renaissance produced a Machiavelli, who has gone down in history as the prophet of nationalism. But as a man of the Renaissance, Machiavelli was much greater; he was also a humanist, and as such cosmopolitan. Humanism and cosmopolitanism were the two logically interlinked strands of the Renaissance culture. Something like nationalism grew in Florence towards the end of the

[23] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

thirteenth century. A certain school of historians deplores that a nascent national culture was swamped by Renaissance Humanism. Dante is believed to have been the bard of nationalism. But he was the first to seek inspiration in pagan .antiquity, which was certainly not nationalist. Socrates wore the crown of martyrdom because he did not believe in the national gods of Greece; Plato was not a good citizen; Xenophone was a positively bad one; homelessness was a pleasure for Diogenes. Drinking deep in the fountainhead of the cosmopolitan tradition of the ancient humanists, Dante sang: "My country is the whole world." Petrarch has been credited with the saying: "Wherever a learned man fixes his seat, there is his home." According to Petrarch, cosmopolitanism was the expression of the "tranquility of soul" which remained untouched by everything that troubled the patriotically inclined. Cosmopolitanism, the attitude of those whose interests were personal and not political, or of those also who adopted a non-political stand, became fashionable among the humanist intelligentsia. Ghiberti, for example, held: "Only he who has learned everything is nowhere a stranger; robbed of his fortune and without friends, he is yet the citizen of every country, and can fearlessly despise the changes of fortune." Galiollus Martius, who was rescued from the clutches of the Inquisition by Lorenzo Medici, wrote: "The man who walked uprightly and acted according to the natural law born within himself would go to heaven, whatever nation he belonged to." Those were the representative views of the men of the Renaissance.[24]

Apart from its cosmopolitanism, which was a logical corollary to Humanism, the Renaissance culture was intensely individualist, and as such came to be the source of inspiration for all libertarian movements in subsequent times. Alberti's dictum—"men can do all things if they will"— "became famous for generations to come. The respect for

[24] Art outstanding exponent of Cosmopolitan humanism was Erasmus.

the dignity of the individual, the belief in the creativeness of man, the passionate defence of the freedom of will,— these characteristic features of the Renaissance culture resulted from the influence of the ancient literature. "This period first gave the highest development to individuality, and then led the individual to the most zealous and thorough study of himself in all forms and under all conditions. The mode of conceiving and representing both the individual and human nature in general was defined and coloured by that influence."[25]

Michelet also had reached a similar judgment about the significance of the Renaissance culture. "To the discovery of the outward world, the Renaissance added a still greater achievement by first discerning and then bringing to light the full, whole nature of man."[26]

It was thus neither an afflorescence of the Italian national culture nor ideology of the bourgeoisie. It was the revolt of man—the universal man casting off the fetters of religion, claiming the heritage of the entire human culture, whose vision and creativeness could not be confined to national boundaries. Dante, Petrarch, Bocaccio, Leonardo, Raphael,. Michelangelo, Alberti, Aretino and many others of the brilliant gallaxy of human genius who together composed the Man of the Renaissance—the universal man, the archetype of the future of a free humanity, did not belong to any country, any class, any age. Embodying the culture of the past, they created a new culture which heralded a future still to come.

The political state of Italy in the fourteenth century was congenial for the unique phenomenon because it precluded the possibility of the rise of any power which, on the fraudulent pretext of representing a collective ego, would demand sacrifice of the man of flesh and blood. The Church

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[25] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

[26] Michelet, *History of France.*

was discredited; the Vatican was seriously weakened by its own wickedness; there was no national State; nor was there any class to claim the leadership of the established order, which happened to be a disorder, or to herald a new order to be ruled by the liberator.

After the death of Frederic II in the fourteenth century, Italy was broken up into a number of City States, and the southern part of the Peninsula came under the rule of a number of despots—soldiers of fortune. In order to consolidate their position, they sought alliance of the men of talent, presumably imitating Charlemagne. Poets, scholars .and scientists adorning their courts were expected to endow a legitimacy upon the upstarts. Many of them were exiles from the North—Milan, Florence, Venice—homes of the rising bourgeoisie. Dante was one of them. Giotto also shared with Dante the patronage of Grande della Scala of Verona—one of the earliest despots of Southern Italy. "The Italian despotisms do not appear to have stunted the free expression of human spirit or to have introduced habits of servility and abasement."[27]

In that atmosphere, birth lost significance. Only merit counted. Mediaeval society, whether aristocratic or ecclesiastical, was caste-ridden. Only men of noble birth could have a place of honour. In fourteenth century Italy, caste distinctions disappeared. Learning and talent secured the highest place in society. Aristotle had laid down: "nobility rests upon excellence and inherited wealth." Dante revised the philosopher of mediaeval culture and declared: "Nobility rests upon personal excellence or on that of predecessors." Talking with his ancestors in heaven, he argues that "nobility is but a mantle from which time is ever cutting something away, unless we ourselves add daily fresh worth to it."[28]

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[27] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

[28] *Divine Comedy.*

Later on, Dante identifies nobility with the capacity for moral and intellectual eminence, and calls *nobilita* the sister of *filosofia.*

That was the starting point of Renaissance Humanism. New values were created. It held that birth decided nothing as to the goodness or badness of a man. Poggio exclaimed: "There is no other nobility than that of personal merit." Other great humanists agreed with him. In the Middle Ages, man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, family or a guild. The Renaissance taught him to realise his individuality—the basic unit of any collective existence. "Man became a spiritual being."[29]

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Another factor which contributed to the triumph of the Renaissance in Italy was the impact of the rationalist and scientific thought of the Arab scholars. After the downfall of the antique civilisation, its positive outcomes—scientific knowledge and rationalist thought—were inherited by the-Arabs. Early Christianity, particularly of the African Patristic period, was contemptuous of science and philosophy. The libraries of Alexandria were destroyed and Hypatia murdered on the order of Bishop Theophilus, three hundred years before the Muslims captured that seat of ancient learning and scientific enquiry. In the beginning of the sixth, century, Emperor Justinian closed all the schools of Athens, and drove away the teachers who flew to Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia. From them, the Arabs learned the teachings of the Greek philosophers. The heritage of ancient culture eventually reached Europe through Spain and Italy. The Arabs not only rescued Greek learning from the ruins of the ancient civilisation, buried deep under the debris of Christian bigotry; their scholars and philosophers greatly added to the precious heritage before it reached Europe to herald

[29] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

a new culture and a new civilisation. The Nominalists of the Paris University, who were the first to shake the foundation of Christian orthodoxy, echoed the Arab philosopher Avicenna who had first raised the question about the relation between the Universals and the particulars. The Arab philosophers were generally inclined towards empiricism; therefore, they made substantial contributions to the scientific knowledge inherited from the Greeks. By the nineth century, the most important Greek works on science had been translated into Arabic. The greatest of the Arab thinkers, Averroes, was recognised in the Middle Ages as the most authoritative commentator of Aristotle. He held that, while the soul perishes with man's brain, reason was immortal and therefore, by cultivating reason, man can enter into a communion with the Universal and Eternal. It was in the form of Averroes' rationalism that Arabic thought influenced European intellect through Spain.

Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus and Emperor Frederic II, the three most outstanding personalities of the Middle Ages, were disciples of the great Arab thinker. Averroism was condemned by Christian orthodoxy as the source of the most arrant heresies. But apart from historically heralding the Renaissance, rationalist scholasticism and the heretical movements were like streams of clear water running into the sand.

The influence of Arab thought in Italy was more dynamic. There, the European mind directly felt the impact of its iconoclastic and scientific aspects. In the thirteenth century the University of Padua, was the centre of intellectual life in Northern Italy. Under the influence of scholastic rationalism that centre of mediaeval learning became "a strong fortress of barbarism, and struggled against Humanism until the seventeenth century."[30]

It is instructive to note that the University of Padua

[30] Lange, *History of Materialism.*

was patronised by the merchant princes of Venice. That fact throws light on the relation between the rising bourgeoisie and the Renaissance. Scholastic rationalism freed the human mind from the rusty chains of Christian orthodoxy, but at the same time forged a new chain; it was the authority of Aristotle as interpreted by Averroes. The soul of man was liberated from the tutelage of the priest. But his mind still remained fettered by a blind faith in terrestrial authorities. Freedom of the will had no meaning unless it led to freedom of action. Spiritual liberation must express itself in man becoming conscious of his sovereignty, of his creativeness, which, knew no bounds. The heritage of ancient culture could not become the source of inspiration for a new stage of human development, unless rationalism was reinforced by Humanism. In Padua, the rationalist struggled against the physicist until scholasticism collapsed under the frontal attack of the humanist Petrarch. Dante represented the transition from mediaevalism to modernism. He was the first romanticist, should the men of the Renaissance be so characterised, because they dared take destiny into their own hand and felt that each had the power to shape the world as he wanted to live in.

The strongest impetus to the Renaissance came from the South of Italy. The scientific knowledge of the Greeks considerably expanded by the Arab scholars, came to Europe through that way. While Padua remained the stronghold of scholastic rationalism, Salerno became the centre of scientific learning. Until the seventeenth century, medical students from all parts of Europe flocked there to learn the teachings of Hippokrates and Galen, elaborated by the researches of their Arabic pupils. The ethnological conception of a privileged Christianity was weakened by the contact with the new vigorous faith preached by the Arabian Prophet. That unsettling and revolutionary impact was felt directly and more strongly in the South of Italy.

"The knowledge and admiration of the remarkable civilisation which Islam had attained was peculiar to Italy from the time of the crusades. This sympathy was fostered by the half-Mohammedan governments of some Italian princes and by constant commercial intercourse with the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean. In the thirteenth century, the Italians recognised a Mohammedan ideal of nobleness, dignity and pride."[31]

Emperor Frederic II, who had left the inhospitable northern climate of Germany for the sunny olive groves of Southern Italy and Sicily, could be called the foster-father of the Renaissance. Himself a highly cultured person, he was a friend of the enlightened Saracens, a protector of learning and promoter of scientific studies. His court at Palermo set the model for the courts of the despots of Southern Italy, which were adorned by the presence of great humanists. In the tradition of his famous grandfather, Barbarossa, Frederic II continuously waged a war against the Pope and instigated the Italian princes to defy the authority of the Vatican. As a token of their defiance, the princes patronised secular learning and promoted Humanism. "It was upon the same territory (Southern Italy) that the spirit of freedom first took its rise in Europe. For, that strip of land in Lower Italy and specially Sicily, was then the native home of enlightened minds and the cradle of the idea of toleration."[32]

While they were appealing to Plato in their struggle against rationalist scholasticism, which invoked the authority of Aristotle, the humanists were also Epicureans. Their individualism was based on the Epicurean as well as the Stoic tradition. While Platonic Humanism and the scientific knowledge of the Greeks came to Italy through the intermediary of the Arab scholars and thinkers, Epicureanism

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[31] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

[32] Lange, *History of Materialism.*

as also the Stoic view of life had reached there directly centuries ago and deeply influenced the intellectual atmosphere of Rome immediately before the advent of Christianity. During the dark ages following upon the sack of Rome by the barbarians from Germany, the works of Epicures were destroyed. But the writings of Cicero and the didactic poem of Lucretius had survived the furore of Christian piety. The Renaissance humanists not only welcomed the message of ancient Greece received through the Arab scientists and philosophers, but drew also upon the native tradition of pagan antiquity. From Cicero and Lucretius, they inherited the Epicurean vision of a godless Universe and of pleasure derived from virtue. Already in the twelfth century, Epicureanism had become the bugbear of the Church. It was condemned as heresy throughout Italy. When Florence was largely destroyed by fire in 1115 and 1617, that calamity was characterised as "divine judgment on the heresy of the luxurious and gluttonous sect of Epicureans."[33] Lorenzo Valla, a younger contemporary of Petrarch, wrote a "Discourse on Pleasure " which scandalised the hypocritical clergy and the blasphemous Vatican, but was read avidly in the cultivated courts of the rebellious princes. Dante testifies to what an extent the Epicurean view of life had influenced the cultural atmosphere of Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Inferno* was populated by two classes of sinners—heretics and the Epicureans. The great humanists of the fourteenth century (Petrarch, Bocaccio, Valla, etc.) were deeply influenced by the writings of Cicero and Seneca. The Epicurean stamp on the humanist view of life and the Renaissance culture in general is unmistakable. Nevertheless, not a few of the most enthusiastic apostles of the new culture belonged to the Church, including some members of the monastic orders created to act as the "spiritual

[33] Giovanni Villani.

police"—to protect Christian orthodoxy and ecclesiastical authority against rationalism and heresy. The spirit of the Renaissance thus was truly humanist; it heralded a universal cosmopolitan culture, which expressed no selfish class interest nor the special genius of any nation.

Apart from the tradition of the ancient Greco-Roman culture and the impact of Arabian learning, the advent of Pope Nicholas V has been identified by competent historians as a contributing cause of the Renaissance. "On that day, the new learning took possession of the Holy See, and Rome began to be considered the capital of the Renaissance." While still an obscure monk, the new Pope is reported to have run into debt for collecting Greek manuscripts. When he reached the Vatican, his agents searched half the world for hidden treasures of ancient knowledge and learning. A large number of lay scholars were employed at the Vatican to translate profane Greek dramas. No less than five thousand old manuscripts on secular subjects were placed on the shelves of the Vatican Library.

After Nicholas V, who went down in history as the "Renaissance Pope", the humanist historian Aeneas Sylvius ascended the Pontificial throne as Pius II. He was the typical man of the Renaissance and has been described as "enemy of hypocrisy and superstition, courageous and consistent ". In him history saw the remarkable spectacle of a prince of the prelate initiating criticism of the Scriptures. He argued that "even if Christianity were not confirmed by miracles, it might still be accepted on account of its morality." That set the tone of the humanist attitude to Christianity. Under the regime of that "most modern of mediaeval Popes", Lorenzo Valla, who had narrowly escaped the tentacles of the Inquisition, became a high functionary at the Vatican, and from that protected position wrote his famous book exposing the "Donation of Constantine" as a fiction. That legendary gift of the first Christian Emperor

was the sanction for the Bishop of Rome claiming supreme temporal power in the Western Empire. "He is, indeed, the founder of freedom of speech in history. When his history of his own time was published, a great number of passages injurious to his countrymen and to his ecclesiastical brethren had to be suppressed. They have been printed lately and contain in fifty pages the concentrated essence of the wickedness of Italy." [34]

Pope Leo X invited Raphael to undertake the restoration of ancient Rome. Under him, "the Vatican resounded with song and music and their echoes were heard through the neighbourhood as a call of joy and gladness." [35] The humanist courtier Ariosto, who was Ambassador of Ferrera to Rome at that time, kept on record that under Leo X the Vatican was "a greater centre of culture than the Florence of the Medicis". Bibbiena's profane comedies were applauded in the Holy City. Ficino wrote that towards the end of the fifteenth century, when the Renaissance was in its high tide, there was no place where liberty prevailed as at Rome. Pope Nicholas V handsomely rewarded Filelfo for his blistering satires. And Poggio, famous for his devastating mockery, the fiercest critique of the clergy, enjoyed the patronage of the Vatican for half a century. Bandello was a Dominican monk. Finally, there is the testimony of Erasmus who visited Rome in 1515, and warmly extolled "the light and liberty" he found there.

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The Christian belief in a divine government of the world had been destroyed by the prevalent spectacles of injustice and misery. Therefore, Dante, an intensely religious man, surrendered the life on this earth to the caprices of fortune. In his old age, even Poggio wrote a book on "The Miseries of the Human Condition ", in which he depicted the world

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[34] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*

[35] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

as a vale of tears and expressed doubt about the possibility of human happiness. That pessimistic view was general among the humanists, who took up a cold and resigned attitude towards the prevailing atmosphere of violence and misrule. Rejecting the notion of Providence, they spoke symbolically of the turning of the wheel of fortune. But the danger of sinking in the treacherous morass of fatalism was headed off by turning to the ancient belief in astrology. The course of life was determined by the movement of heavenly bodies which were physical systems. Practice of astrology meant that man wanted to know what would be the course of his life if he did not take destiny in his own hand. The belief in astrology, therefore, expressed the will to penetrate the future so as to determine it.

Great humanists, however, were free from the superstition. Petrarch, for example, was contemptuous about the astrologers. In his novels he mercilessly exposed the lies of their system. Giovanni Villani declared: "No constellation can subjugate the free will of man." Matteo Villani condemned astrology as a vice, and Mirandola described it as the source of "all impurity and immorality ". He also exclaimed with his characteristic vehemence: "The dark Ages which spared themselves the trouble of induction and free enquiry, can have no right to impose upon us their dogmatic verdict."[36]

Burckhardt, himself an ardently religious man and anxious to show that the men of the Renaissance were essentially Christian, writes: "Their Humanism was in fact pagan, and became more and more so as its sphere widened in the fifteenth century. Its representatives, advance-guard of unbridled individualism, display as a rule such a character that even their religion becomes a matter of indifference to us. They easily got the name of atheists and spoke freely against the Church."[37]

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[36] Mirandola, *Discourse on the Dignity of Man.*

[37] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

With their paganism, the humanists humanised religion itself. Codrus Urcius, a professor at the University of Bologna, wrote against the Church and the monks in the most abusive language. But he also wrote reverentially about "the true god-man Jesus Christ". Yet his house and manuscripts were set on fire by the "spiritual police ". Thereupon, driven to a frenzy of wrath and despair, the old scholar rushed out in the street and there, standing in front of an image of the Madonna, exclaimed: "Listen to what I tell you; I am not mad; I am saying what I mean. If I ever call upon you in the hour of my death, you need not hear me or take me among your own, for I will go and spend eternity with the Devil."

With the humanists, the idea of greatness and fame replaced the Christian faith in heaven. Virtue was to be practised not for any recompense in the world to come, but to conquer a place of distinction and honour in this, and to be immemorialised in history. The notion of immortality was thus given a new meaning. It was not an idle dream to be realised, if ever, by the grace of a capricious Providence. It could be attained by man's own effort. The ideal of immortality could be realised in the permanence of the product of the creative genius of man, in the continuity of human culture. That noble ideal was found in "Scipio's Dream "—the sixth book of Cicero's *Republic.* Therein is a fascinating description of the life of great men after their death. It is a picture of the pagan heaven. In the *Divine Comedy,* the devout Dante also dreamed "Scipio's Dream" and set the pattern of the humanist ideal of fame and historical greatness.

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The spirit of scientific enquiry inherited by the Arabs from the Greeks had reached Western Europe through Spain early in the thirteenth century. But the University of Paris and other seats of learning were preoccupied with theological

disputes and metaphysical speculations. Empiricism and .scientific study remained confined to a few individuals like Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon and Gerbert of Rheims. "The Renaissance of the twelfth century", therefore, was unable to defeat mediaevalism in Western Europe as did the Italian Renaissance two hundred years later.

The failure of the ancient Greek philosophers to explain nature in natural terms led to Platonic mysticism, which prepared the ground for the rise of the Christian religion.[33] Originally a creation of the innate rationality of man, the desire to know the cause of things, religion filled up the spiritual vacuum created by the inadequacy of ancient scientific knowledge. For a thousand years, the European mind was dominated by the religious mode of thought. Eventually, Arab scholars laboriously collected the scattered records of knowledge left behind by Thales, Pythagoras, Democritos, Hippocrates, Euclid, Archimedes, Aristarchus, Hipparchus, Galen and other forerunners of science. A succession of them — Khaled, Ben, Yezid, Ben Musa, Geber, the two Al Hazens, Avicenna and Averroes—sifted, co-ordinated, elucidated and added to that precious patrimony of mankind. It ultimately reached Europe to stimulate the age-long struggle for spiritual freedom and search for truth. The expansion of social and political freedom—modern civilisation—resulted from that struggle.[39]

While the prosperous traders of Genoa, the powerful merchant princes of Venice and the opulent bankers

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[38] "Greek science was not killed, it died. It had reached the limit of possible expansion within the mould in which it was cast." B. Farrington. *Science in Antiquity.*

[39] "Science is the last step in man's mental development, and it may be regarded as the highest and most characteristic attainment of human culture. It is a very late and refined product that could not develop except under certain special conditions. Even the conception of science, in its specific sense, did not exist before the times of the great Greek thinkers—before the Pythagoreans and the Atomists, Plato and Aristotle. And this first conception seems to be forgotten and eclipsed in the following centuries. It had to be rediscovered and re-established in the age of the Renaissance." Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man.*

of Florence, preoccupied with the power politics, court intrigues and wars waged with mercenary soldiers, were unconcerned with larger political issues of general interest, Rienzi established a republican government at Rome and inscribed on its banner "Liberty, Justice and Peace". The great Petrarch was the Tribune's friend, philosopher and guide; but that was before Renaissance Humanism had brought about a spiritual revolution—a revolutionary change in the cultural atmosphere. The ignorant and superstitious masses of the Roman people could be still swayed by the monks. They turned against Rienzi shortly after they had acclaimed him. as the Tribune. "The political scheme of Rienzi failed. But it started a movement in the world of thought, deeper and more enduring than State transactions. For his ideas were adopted by the greatest writer then living, and were expounded by him in the most eloquent and gracious prose that had been heard for a thousand years. Petrarca called the appearance of the patriotic Tribune and rhetorician the dawn of a new world and Golden Age."[40]

The European mind resumed the struggle for spiritual freedom more successfully in Italy, because the revival or empiricism and scientific enquiry was more widespread there thanks to the fact that a large share of the patrimony of ancient scientific knowledge had fallen to that fortunate land. At any time, among any civilised people, individuals may appear who, like Roger Bacon and Gerbert of Reims, for instance, might be "masters of the whole knowledge of the age. It is another matter when a whole people takes a natural delight in the study and investigation of nature, at a time when other nations are indifferent, that is to say, when the discoverer is not threatened or wholly ignored, but can count on friendly support of congenial spirits. That this was the case in Italy, is unquestionable."[41]

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[40] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*

[41] Burckhardt, *Renaissance.*

The Italian Renaissance is usually interpreted as a revival of art and literature. The scientific work of the period is not only ignored, but some historians go to the extent of maintaining that its contribution to science was inconsequential and negligible. The artistic and literary creation of the Renaissance was, indeed, so very imposing as to hold historians spellbound; thus, they overlooked its other aspects. Beginning from Dante, most of the great personalities of the period were keenly interested in scientific study and many made contributions which have not yet been quite surpassed. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, anticipated not a few of the technological achievements of our time. Dante was a keen student of natural phenomena. Petrarch was not only a geographer; he wrote a book called *Aspects of Nature.* Giotto was a naturalist. Botany and Zoology were studied in the gardens of the Academy of Florence. The study of the structure of plants and their classification was taken up at the point where Theophrates had left off two thousand years ago. There also recommenced the recording of the story of the animal world as Aristotle had begun. Aeneas Sylvius was a geographer as well as a historian. Salerno and Bologna were the principal centres for the study of the medical sciences. "latrochemistry," which replaced alchemy, contributed to the development of the art of healing disease. "A stream of new chemical thought begins in the period of the Renaissance. In the schools of latrochemistry, biological and medical thought becomes prevalent."[42] All the great painters and sculptors were keen students of anatomy so much so as to convince the great historian Michelet that the discovery of man by the Renaissance was a greater achievement than the discovery of the outer world, by which he meant knowledge of nature. The Italians were the first among modern peoples to be keenly interested in the observation of nature.[43]

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[42] Ernst Gassier, *An Essay on Man.*

[43] See Humboldt, *Cosmos.* 7

The science of perspective (optics) and a minimum knowledge of anatomy and physiology are the pre-requisites for realistic painting and sculpture. The treatise of Andreas Vasilius on "Human Body" was published simultaneously with the famous work of Copernicus. It was based on anatomical and physiological researches carried on at the schools of Padua and Bologna for many years. Mondino da Zuzzi had published a textbook on anatomy as early as the end of the thirteenth century. As testified by Leonardo da Vinci, the object of the Renaissance artists was to see the world in the light of nature, and for that purpose they studied nature and the human body in the minutest detail. "In order to obtain an exact and complete knowledge of these, I have dissected more than ten human bodies, destroying all the various members, and removing even the very smallest particles of the flesh which surrounded these veins without causing any effusion of blood other than the imperceptible bleeding of the capillary veins. And as one single body did not suffice for so long a time, it was necessary to proceed by stages with so many bodies as would render my knowledge complete; and this I repeated twice over in order to discover the differences."[44]

As regards the achievements of particular men, the Renaissance produced not only a scientific prodigy like Leonardo. He was matched by Toscanelli and Pacioli. In the fifteenth century, those three were the masters of mathematics, natural sciences and technology. Leonardo had rejected Ptolemy's "Almagest" before Copernicus, and the latter freely called himself his pupil. The typical men of the Renaissance were of universal genius—universal men, in the true sense. "Prodigies of versatility were not infrequent. Men passed and repassed from painting to sculpture, from sculpture to architecture and metal work, and from these

[44] Leonardo da Vinci, quoted in E. MacCurdy's *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci*.

forms of energy to poetry, philosophy and natural sciences. The classical examples of this omnicompetence were Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Alberti".[45] Raphael was also an architect, while Michelangelo built the fortifications of Florence. In technology, Leonardo was two hundred years ahead of his time. While Galileo was still an obscure teacher of astronomy at Padua, Leonardo not only anticipated theoretically twentieth century feats of technology, but actually built a model aeroplane and tried to fly.

Leonardo has been described as a mighty universal genius who can be compared to Aristotle, and as a master of physical science, to Archimedes. "A painter, sculptor, engineer, architect, physicist, biologist and philosopher, was Leonardo, and in each role he was supreme. Perhaps no man in the history of the world shows such a record. His performance, extraordinary as it was, must be reckoned as small compared with the ground he opened up, the grasp of fundamental principles he displayed, and the insight with which he seized upon the true methods of investigation in each branch of enquiry."[46] Believing that painting was based on geometry, Leonardo mastered that science, and for that purpose carried on extensive studies in mathematics generally. He dissected human bodies in order to acquire exact anatomical knowledge, without which he held the human form could not be truly reproduced either in painting or in sculpture. For understanding optics, he studied the structure of human eyes.[47]

The famous eighteenth century surgeon, William Hunter, expressed the following opinion: "I am fully persuaded that Leonardo was the best anatomist at that time In the world. Leonardo was certainly the first man we know of to introduce the practice of making anatomical drawings."

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[45] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

[46] Watham, *History of Science.,*

[47] See J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci.*

As regards geology, Leonardo anticipated Hutton and Lyell by three hundred years in formulating the basic ideas of what subsequently came to be known as the uniformitarian theory. He argued that the biblical deluge was not universal, nor were fossils found inland and on mountain tops laid down there by the great flood. He visualised that water circulated through rain, rivers, sea, cloud, and again down as rain; that ancient bottoms of seas had become mountains, and mountains had been washed away by rain. Though gifted with the power of soaring imagination, which enabled him to anticipate profound theories of science, in practice, Leonardo depended rigorously on experiment and observation.

"All true sciences are the result of experience, which passes through our senses. Where reason is not, its place is taken by clamour. This never occurs when things are certain. Therefore, where there are quarrels, there true science is not, because truth can only end one way."[48] Leonardo had avoided theological controversy as irrelevant for his pursuits, until the study of psychology brought him to the problem of soul. Having described soul as a part of human existence, he declared: "The rest of the definition of the soul I leave to the imagination of friars, those fathers of the people who know all secrets by inspiration." That may appear to be evasive; but the significance of the thinly veiled sarcasm is clear enough. To summarise, "if we had to choose one figure to stand for all time as the incarnation of the true spirit of the Renaissance, we should point to the majestic form of Leonardo da Vinci.[49]

Leonardo's giant personality cast its shadow to eclipse the reputation of other scientists of the Renaissance. There was, for example, Paracelsus, who was the first to find fault with Galen, and criticise as humbug and fraud what passed as medical science until that time. He also set aside the

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[48] Quoted by J. P. Richter, *Literary Worlds of Leonardo da Vinci.*

[49] Watham, *History of Science.*

mystical practices of alchemy and harnessed the knowledge of chemistry of his time (latrochemistry) in the service of medicine. Then, Vasalius of Padua criticised Galen's notion about the structure of human bodies, and began teaching anatomy by dissecting corpses. There were others who followed Vasalius; among them was Fabricius, from whom Harvey learned about the valves in veins. An Academy for the empirical study of nature was founded at Naples by Telesio.

The revival of science did not take place to promote the development of the means of capitalist production. Neither Leonardo nor Copernicus nor Galileo had any connection with the rising bourgeoisie. The latter two were devout Christians, and Leonardo was a member of the "intellectual aristocracy" which the Renaissance was supposed to have produced according to the materialist conception of history. The traders and money-lenders of the Italian cities were too vulgarly selfish and materialistic to patronise science. Columbus found no patronage from his native Genoa and had to appeal to the feudal court of Spain to finance his expedition. Venice contributed the least to the Renaissance. Florence played a role because the Medicis, engaged in a struggle for power with the Vatican, wanted to outshine the Renaissance Popes as patrons of learning, literature and art.

A recent study by a modern sociologist of Marxist persuasion could not help revealing that there was no causal connection between the rise of the bourgeoisie and the Renaissance. "This new intellectual spirit which was formed in the towns, and not in some monastery, takes up a position opposed to the town by a curious inversion typical of the *literati*..... Petrarca, Poggio and Sadoleto showed their desire to keep at a distance the bourgeoise engaged in his daily routine."[50] The same study also reveals that the bourgeoisie was indifferent to the Renaissance and admits that the vul-

[50] Alfred von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance.*

gar trading class was culturally influenced by the revival of science, learning, literature and art. "The bourgeoisie, who had been engaged in active life, above all in business, had, to begin with, forced the representatives of pure learning on to the periphery of existence. But in the meantime, the bourgeoisie had become untrue to its origins or, at any rate, to its original driving power. Now activities at the centre were once more influenced from the periphery, culture coloured economic development and changes of sociological origin were helped along by the intellectual and cultural influence of the intelligentsia. The *literati* were encouraging the bourgeoisie to become less and less true to itself."[51] So, to be influenced by the new culture was against the nature and "driving power" of the bourgeoisie. Renaissance humanism was not the ideology of the rising bourgoisie.

The Renaissance was the resumption of man's struggle for spiritual freedom and search for truth undertaken at the dawn of civilisation, but confused and partially interrupted by the religious mode of thought which prevailed for more than a millennium. The Renaissance did not herald the rise of any particular class; it was the revolt of man, patronised and promoted by all the free spirits of the time belonging to the feudal aristocracy, the Church or the rising class of traders. Classicism was conservative. As against it, the romanticism of the humanists proclaimed the freedom of will, and faith in the creativeness of man. It liberated reason from the yoke of teleology. It maintained that the law-governed Universe did not preclude revolutions to be brought about by man's will to freedom and urge to create. It declared the spiritual liberation of man, and ushered in the era of modern civilisation, which immensely expanded the scope of human activity. Growing knowledge of nature increased the power of man to prosecute the struggle for freedom more effectively than ever before.

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[51] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER V

REVOLT OF THE ANGELS

BY its very nature, the humanist culture of the Renaissance was exclusive, in the sense that its diffusion was limited by the smallness of the educated class of the time. It heralded a new civilisation, still to rise. New ideas were conceived and novel ideals visualised to stimulate fresh human activities and to inspire more ambitious human endeavours. Whatever the future might hold in store for it, Renaissance Humanism had to cope with the given intellectual equipment, emotional preoccupations and cultural atmosphere of the epoch. "For lack of education, the great mass of the public was incapable of understanding works of refined order. Nor did this uncultivated mass consist only of the lower classes, for the large majority of the rich and noble have always belonged to it."[1]

The popular mind was still saturated with religion; and religion was not something superimposed. It was a creation of human mind. Man's mind cannot outgrow its own creation until it has created. something new which, being bigger and brighter than the old, outshines it. Humanism was destined to replace supernaturalism. But the process was bound to be long and laborious. Meanwhile, religion, belief in the supernatural, held sway on man's mind. The social and cultural history of Europe remained interwoven with the ecclesiastical history; the moral and intellectual life of man was dominated by the concern for his relation with God.

The Christian faith was so stubbornly abiding because it rested upon the experience of two cataclysms. Originally,

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[1] Charles Seignobos, *The Rise of European Civilisation.*

it offered the hope of a life after death to man terrified by the spectre of the dissolution of the antique social order. Later on, the belief in the evangelical mission of the Church enabled the Christian world to survive the chaos following upon the fall of the Roman Empire. As a distant hope hereafter and an immediate protection in this world, Christianity became the sheet-anchor of European life, and the Church its embodiment.

"A slow but sure and unbroken progress of intellectual culture had been going on within its bosom for a series of ages..... All the vital and productive elements of human culture were here united and mingled. The development or society had gone on naturally and gradually; the innate passion and genius for science and for art constantly received fresh food and fresh inspiration, and were in their fullest bloom and vigour; civil liberty was established upon firm foundations; solid and systematical political structures in beneficient rivalry, and the necessities of civil life led to the combination and improvement of physical resources; the laws which eternal Providence had impressed on human affairs were left to their free and tranquil operation; what had decayed had crumbled away and disappeared; while the germs of fresh life continually shot up and flourished; in Europe were found united the most intelligent, the bravest and the most civilised nations still in the freshness of youth."[2] That idealised picture of the Middle Ages was not conjured out of the imagination of a chauvinistic European. It was realistic to the extent that it depicted Christianity as the central mooring of European life and the only cohesive factor of society until the close of the Middle Ages.

Opposing supernaturalism with Humanism, attaching greater importance to the reality of life in this world than to the idle dream of happiness in Heaven, the Renaissance

[2]Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany.*

demanded a complete break with the tradition of the age of religion. The Reformation which followed, on the other hand, was in conformity with that venerable tradition. Therefore, the latter appeared to be more popular and successful than the former, which was like a dazzling flash out of nowhere to be drowned again in the surrounding darkness of classical immobility, conventional orderliness and catholicity of the Christian religion.

The Renaissance was a revolution, checked by the Reformation and the so-called Counter-Reformation. So-called, because originally it was a measure against the revolt of man, initiated under the patronage of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain before the Reformation broke out in Germany. After the Spanish conquest of Italy and the siege of Rome by Charles V, the political situation in that country changed; the Renaissance was caught in the ebb-tide. But in the mean time, Humanism had crossed the Alps and radiated northwards, though there also to be pushed into the backwaters by the rising tide of the Reformation. The resurgence of man had to bide time for the revolt of the angels to blow over.

Burckhardt concluded his study of the Renaissance with the following observation: "It can hardly be doubted that the Renaissance would soon have destroyed those two Orders (Franciscan and Dominican) had it not been for the German Reformation and the Counter-Reformation which that provoked. Their saints and popular preachers could hardly have saved them. And who can say what fate was in store for the papacy itself, if the Reformation had not saved it." That was a sound judgment about the historical significance of the Reformation.

As a matter of fact, the revolt of the angels against the sacrilege of the temple of God, and to restore religion to the pristine purity of faith, had broken out first in Italy during the later period of the Renaissance. The standard of revolt

was raised by Savonarola at the end of the fifteenth century in Florence, the native home of the rising bourgeoisie, who were supposed to have created Renaissance Humanism as the ideology of their class. Freely opposing the "atheism, immorality" and the secular culture of the Renaissance, Savonarola passionately advocated return to the virtues of early Christianity, and incited the Florentine "democracy" in a successful revolt against the corrupt government of the opulent bourgeoisie. To divert popular attention from the degeneration of religion and corruption of the Church, exposed by the Humanists, Savonarola denounced the vices of the temporal rulers—usury, luxury, amusements and scandalous fashions. Captivating the poor people's imagination with the picture of the early Christian Communes, and swaying the popular mind by a fanatical appeal to the faith in a just and benevolent God, Savonarola attained his ideal, which was the: establishment of a theocratic State in Florence, in which "all men were to bow in blessed humility before the Unseen." The Florentine friar was neither a descendant of the great heretics of the Middle Ages nor was he a forerunner of the Reformation. Because, he did not challenge the authority of the Pope and the spiritual pretension of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He represented the Counter-Reformation, and as such was the embodiment of the religious tradition which resisted the radiation of the spirit of Renaissance.

At the end of the Middle Ages, Europe entered a period of clash between the two currents of thought underlying her entire cultural tradition. Both the currents—of rationalism and religion—flowed from the pre-Christian antiquity. Essentially, both expressed man's desire to know and will to be free. But in course of time, religion disowned its original justification, and faith was postulated as the antithesis of reason. That internal conflict of the European culture which closed the Middle Ages and heralded the modern civilisation, was graphically depicted hi Savonarola's attitude to, and

appreciation of, the intellectual heritage of the pre-Christian antiquity which inspired the Renaissance. Attacking the Humanists, he thundered:

"The only good thing we owe to Plato and Aristotle is that they brought forward many arguments which we can use against the heretics. Yet, they and other philosophers are now in hell. An old woman knows more about faith than Plato. It would be good for religion if many books that, seem useful were destroyed. When there were not so many books and not so many arguments and disputes, religion grew more quickly than it has done since."[3] The militant monk condemned science as harmful because it distracted man's mind from God to secular matters. But at the same time he realised the necessity of prostituting knowledge and learning. Science was Satan's snare; yet, a few should have to brave it, so that "there may be no want of intellectual athletes to confute the Sophism of the heretics".

Human mind had been accustomed to the religious mode-of thought for a whole millennium. Even when a new vista was opened up by the revolt of man against the agelong spiritual stagnation, it would not easily come out of the rut. Because, religion had become a mental habit. As such, it persisted even long after it had ceased to be a spiritual necessity. That cultural and intellectual atavism was evidenced by the Reformation, which appeared to eclipse the Renaissance.

Humanism, however, was not a still-born child. Having grown so luxuriantly in the congenial atmosphere of Italy, it naturally attracted the attention of free spirits in other parts of Europe. By the middle of the fifteenth century, some German scholars, notably, Agricola and Reuchlin visited Italy, and carried the message of Humanism across the Alps. "This reflorescence of Italy in time reacted on Germany. In consequence of the uninterrupted intercourse with Italy.

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[3] Villari, *Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola.*

occasioned by ecclesiastical relations, the Germans soon discovered the superiority of the Italians; they saw themselves .despised by the disciples of the grammarians and rhetoricians of that country, and began to be ashamed of the rudeness of their spoken, and the poverty of their written language. It was not surprising, therefore, that young aspiring spirits at length determined to learn their Latin in Italy.... A man endowed with the peculiar talent necessary for appropriating to himself the classical learning of the age, then arose—Rudolf Huesmann of Groningen, called Agricola. His scholarship excited universal admiration; he was applauded in the schools as a Roman, a second Virgil."[4]

It is, however, not surprising that the message did not find any great response in the Universities of the Northern countries, though they had been the breeding ground or scholastic rationalism—that powerful solvent of ecclesiastical authority and religious orthodoxy. The anxiety to rationalise faith, to revitalise atrophied religious thought by injecting in its senile veins the serum of its original rationality, was mildly shocked by Humanism, which struck at the very roots of religion. If in Italy, the University of Padua, as the centre of scholastic learning, resisted the Renaissance culture to the bitter end, the Northern seats of traditional learning could not be any less conventional and conservative. France had become a centralised National State, which recognised Catholicism as the official religion and protected the Roman Church, against schism and heterodoxy. The German Princes and also the Emperor were carrying on a perennial struggle against the Universalism of Rome. Nevertheless, with a few honourable exceptions, most of the German Universities did not take kindly to the message of Humanism. They regarded it as a new form of Roman domination. "It was the importation of a foreign element, the setting up of an old enemy,

[4] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

the restoration of a world the Germans under Alaric and Theodoric had overthrown.... The pagan spirit, the impatience of Christianity, appears only in one or two Germans."[5] And they kept their convictions to themselves.

Nevertheless the spirit of the Renaissance could not be kept out of Germany. As a matter of fact, it preceded the Reformation and, in a way, prepared the ground for it. Erasmus represented the migration of Humanism to the North, and he also heralded the Reformation in so far it was a revolt against the corruption of the Church. The invention of printing was Germany's contribution to the cause of Humanism. The Renaissance literature, imported from Italy by Agricola, Reuchlin and von-Hutten, could be made easily accessible to lay readers. Boycott by the Universities could no longer block the spread of the new learning. The initial stage of the Renaissance in Germany culminated in the publication of the works of Erasmus. "Of all scholars who have popularised scholarly literature, Erasmus was the most brilliant, the man whose aims were the loftiest, and who produced lasting effects over the widest area. His work was done, too, at the right moment for the North. A genial power was needed to thaw the frost-bound soil, and to prepare those fruits which each land was to bring forth in its own way."[6]

Erasmus has been described as the most typical European of all times, the flower of the Renaissance and the greatest of Humanists. Opinions may differ in this respect. But Erasmus certainly personified more clearly and faithfully than any other man the most characteristic feature of the culture of his time, namely, the conflict between the dissatisfaction with the religious mode of thought, which drove the more courageous amongst men to fall back upon themselves, and the lingering hope of the possibility of reforming religion

[5] Lord Acton. *Lectures on Modern History.*

[6] *Cambridge Modem History.*

so as to head off the catastrophe of the cultivated Europeans being cut adrift from all spiritual moorings. Erasmus is not counted among the great philosophers. He did not produce a system of speculative thought, but lived the noblest philosophy of life. He did not possess any poetical talent, and his artistic taste does not seem to have been of a very high level. He distinguished himself as the prophet of toleration and the populariser of humanist learning. He could be called the educator of his time. He was a master letter writer; personal correspondence was his main instrument for imparting ideas. He corresponded with Popes, Emperors, Kings, scholars and statesmen, all of whom held him in great esteem. His literary works were voluminous, covering a wide range or problems. Apart from the *Dialogues,* the book which truly reflected his spirit was a satire in *Praise of Folly.*

Bearing the stamp of the typical Renaissance literature, such as the works of Pico della Mirandola, Lorenzo Valla, Poggio, Filelfo and others of their kind, the most popular book of Erasmus made the deepest impression and had a far-reaching influence on the culture and intellectual atmosphere of the time. "This little work brought together, with singular talent and brevity, matters which had for some time been current and popular in the world, gave it a form which satisfied all the demands of taste and criticism, and fell in with the most decided tendency of the age. It produced an indescribable effect; twenty-seven editions appeared even during the life time of Erasmus; it was translated into all languages, and greatly contributed to confirm the age in its anti-clerical dispositions."[7]

As a respectable publisher of conventional world classics would most probably exclude from the collected works of Erasmus this epoch-making book, it is worthwhile to indicate its contents briefly. Even to-day the book can be read with

[7] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

equal benefit. The object is to show to what an extent folly dominates human life. Taking the idea from a popular fable, Folly is impersonated by a princess born in the Happy Islands, ruled by her father, nursed by Drunkenness and Rudeness; she becomes the mistress of a powerful Kingdom to which all classes of men belong and she passes them all in review. The clergy receives her particular attention. She ridicules the men of God by observing that, though they have the largest share of her favour, they do not own their obligation. She pities the theologians for having lost themselves in the labyrinth of their fantasies, and taunts them for their Atlas-like efforts to hold up the Church on their shoulders. Then she turns to the ignorance, the dirty physical habits, and the ludicrous pursuit of the monks and the barbarous style of their preaching. The Bishops come in for their due share, being chided for the lust for gold rather than solicitude for the souls of the faithful. The court of Rome and the Pope Himself also receive her favour. Turning to the secular professions, Folly makes fun of national pride and professional conceit of all kind. She concludes by declaring that without her the human race will die out. Who will marry without folly? Who can be happy without flattery and self-love? Yet, is not such happiness a folly? It is based on delusion. It is easier to imagine oneself a king than to be a king in reality. Those who are the nearest to brutes, being divest of the last vestige of reason, imagine themselves to be the happiest. This biting satire on every aspect of mediaeval life becomes even more pointed thanks to drawings by Hans Holbein— another outstanding figure of the Renaissance in Germany. The fact that such a devastating exposure of the hypocrisy, foolishness and greed of contemporary society was so very widely read, proved that the Renaissance appeared to lose its early exuberance in Italy because it was spreading over a much wider field. "The spiritual declension of Rome was the more important by reason of the new spirit of rationalism

which was springing up in Northern Europe."[8] In the latter half of the fifteenth century, a new life stirred in every depart ment of human intelligence. Von Hutten exclaimed: "What an age! Learning flourishes, the mind of man awakes! It is a joy to be alive." The message was spread in England by Thomas More, in France by Rabelais, among, many lesser lights. Although "it was believed that the Renaissance prepared the Reformation, that Luther only hatched the Erasmianegg,"[9] the men of the Northern Renais sance opposed Luther's intolerance and dogmatism, following: Erasmus when he broke with the Reformation on the issue of free will. In that controversy, even Melanchthon sided with Erasmus as against Luther whom he accused of fatalism. "In Northern countries, the Renaissance began later than in Italy, and soon became entangled with the Reformation. But there was a brief period at the beginning of the sixteenth-century, during which the new learning was being vigorously disseminated in France, England and Germany without, having become involved in theological controversy."[10]

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The factor which limited the spread of Humanism in Italy was much stronger in Germany. The faith in the supernatural, conceived as the personal God of Christianity, held the popular mind spellbound. The educated were also preoccupied with theology. The great seats of learning were the scene of scholastic disputations about the nature of God and of soul and the relations between the two. The intellectual life was still very largely dominated by the religious mode of thought. There was opposition to the papal theocracy and ecclesiastical privileges; there was also disgust with the corruption of the clergy and the monastic Orders. But the revolt was not yet against religion—of man against God.

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[8] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

[9] *Lord* Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*

[10] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

"The opposition was stronger and more denned than anything in Italy; but it was against Catholicism, not Christianity."[11]

In that atmosphere, the secular, iconoclastic spirit of the Renaissance had to be subordinated to the striving for a reform of the ecclesiastical government and attempts to purge Christianity of clerical corruption. The Northern Renaissance "was much interested in applying standards of scholarship to the Bible, and in obtaining a more accurate text than the Vulgate".[12]

Erasmus himself promoted that tendency. Like Rabelais, he preached unadulterated Humanism, the revolt of man, through satire; but in other writings, he pleaded for reform of the Church, doctrinal purity and simplicity of faith. Most men of the Northern Renaissance thought in terms of retrieving the original purity of the Christian faith. Scholasticism had reinforced the rationalist foundation of religion, and the educated classes of Northern Europe had been greatly influenced by scholastic learning. Therefore, there religion could more successfully and for a longer period resist Humanism, which appeared to be a chaotic, amoral, if not actually immoral, outburst of wilfulness of extravagant individuals against universal orderliness. "The Reformation began not in Italy, where the pagan spirit of the Renaissance predominated, but among two peoples in which the religious sense was strongest."[13] England could be also added to the category. Ranke describes the Reformation as "an intellectual movement of a totally different kind" —different from the humanist movement led by Erasmus. It preached a rationalised Christianity which appeared to satisfy the spiritual cravings, intellectual demands and cultural necessities of the educated man of Northern and Central Europe.

[11] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History.*
[12] Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*
[13] Seignobos, *The Rise of European Civilisation.*

Thanks to its foundation of primitive rationalism, religion in course of time indeed became a mental habit. Nevertheless, the religious mode of thought was not a stagnant pool; as thought, it also was subject to the law of the dynamics of ideas. Purity is the ideal of faith, and striving for that ideal, faith exhausts its possibilities of promoting spiritual development. Consistent faith, striving to regain pristine purity, therefore, is also a solvent of religion, the other being scepticism. To avoid that Nemesis of its logical outcome, religion necessarily institutionalises itself. Its original foundation of primitive rationalism is gradually buried deep under an elaborate superstructure of irrational doctrines, dogmas, rituals and mechanical practices prescribed by orthodoxy. Ultimately, the spirit of man, egged on by the urge for freedom and quest for knowledge, breaks out of the fetters of faith. To reform religion, therefore, is an idle dream. Religion cannot be really reformed. It must be institutionalised, and institutionalism implies concentration of power, its unavoidable abuse, restriction of freedom, and corruption. Once human mind has outgrown its infancy, when spiritual needs could be satisfied by the naive rationalism of primitive religion, faith in the supernatural, conceived either as many gods or one God or an impersonal Providence, places fetters on the possibility of human development. For the sake of further spiritual development—intellectual growth, moral uplift and cultural progress—they must be burst. That was the purpose of the Renaissance; therefore, it counterposed super-naturalism with Humanism, claimed for man the power as well as the right to shape his own destiny, and proclaimed that a law-governed Universe did not preclude the freedom of human will. The Reformation, on the contrary, was a "religious movement the object of which was to restore the purity of revelation, and Germany undertook this mighty task", which by its very nature was impossible of accomplishment, although "various events concurred to give that direc-

tion to the mind of the country, and to incite a strenuous opposition to the See of Rome."[14]

The events which promoted the Reformation in Germany have already been reviewed. They were not peculiar to that country. And the strenuous opposition to the See of Rome soon lost its original concern for the purity of faith, and secular considerations became its motive force. The opposition to one form of institutionalised Christianity led to the rise of an alternative institutionalisation of religion. Faith was not purified; it became more sophisticated—a new system of doctrinal orthodoxy justified with pseudo-rationalism. "The Reformation and Counter-Reformation alike represent the rebellion of less civilised nations against the intellectual domination of Italy. In the case of the Reformation, the revolt was also political and theological; the authority of the Pope was rejected, and the tribute which he had obtained from the power of the keys (to the gates of Heaven) ceased to be paid. In the case of the Counter-Reformation, there was only revolt against the intellectual and moral freedom of Renaissance Italy."[15]

Although the Reformation led by Luther was very largely a theological dispute to cloak a mundane struggle for power, originally it developed on the background of a genuinely religious movement. The great heretics of the Middle Ages heralded the Reformation as well as the Renaissance. The immediate cause of the Reformation, however, was the revival of the Augustinian doctrine of Grace to combat Nominalist scholasticism which invoked the authority of Thomas Aquinas. That was a genuine and disinterested theological controversy of the kind which had for several centuries been the ferment for the revival of classical learning. The fight against Thomist theology in defence of pure faith was led by Johann de Wesalia who called the Dominican

[14]Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

[15] Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

Saint the "Prince of Errors". That was long before Luther. .The genuinely religious tradition of the Reformation is to be traced farther back to Wycliff, whose teachings spread throughout Central Europe in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Hussite rebellion in Bohemia and the subsequent heretical movements in Southern Germany were inspired by Wycliff's teachings. The European heretics advocated return to the purity and simplicity of the early Christian faith. Eventually, Luther appeared as the champion of the old cause. But that was only apparent. He was driven to that position by other considerations. "Luther and Calvin were not philosophers in search for a belief which could satisfy reason; they were theologians basing their doctrine upon their interpretation of the Scriptures.... They had no more desire for free examination—the freedom of each man to choose his own religion, than the Middle Ages had."[16]

Nevertheless, the Reformation was the logical consequence of the whole history of Christianity. Its cause was rooted in that background, not adventitious, such as the rise of a new class. Theology could not completely eclipse the religious essence of Christianity. It was the individual's anxiety for salvation. After Christianity became institutionalised, every believer recognised the Church as the sole instrument for the attainment of salvation. But there were two ways—faith and religious practices. Which of the two was more strictly according to the true doctrine of Jesus? The crux of the question obviously was interpretation of the Scriptures. There was the traditional teaching of the Church. But even the Church did not prohibit individual believers to study the Sacred Books in which the divine revelation was directly expressed. St. Augustin, relying upon the Pauline Gospel, had laid down that only unquestioning faith in the merit of Christ was the way to salvation. But subsequently

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[16] Seignobos, *The Rise of European Civilisation.*

while not questioning the authority of Augustin, the Church attached greater importance to religious practices, particularly, the Sacrament. Ever since the tenth century, when the faith in the Millennium was exploded by experience, there had been devout Christians who claimed the right to go directly to the Scriptures for satisfying themselves regarding the choice of the two alternative ways to salvation. They were condemned as heretics. They were the forerunners of Wyclifl and Huss. They were genuinely religious men, who wanted their belief to satisfy reason.

Irrespective of the theological and political motives of the movement subsequently led by him, there is no ground for doubting that originally Luther's position was purely religious. A neurasthenic so as to have the Messiah complex, he felt the torment experienced by many individual Christian souls about the choice of the way to salvation. Early in his life, Luther seems to have found comfort in the Pauline Gospel of unquestioning faith in the merit of Christ, elaborated by Augustin as the doctrine of salvation through Grace. But then adventitious circumstances intervened to drive Luther to a position where he appeared to out-Paul St. Paul.[17]

The logical implication of the Augustinian doctrine of. salvation is to question the usefulness of institutionalised Christianity. If prescribed rituals were not essential for the attainment of salvation, a priesthood, an ecclesiastical government, and a clerical hierarchy were also superfluous. In the context of the historical background of the heretical tradition, and also due to the support of Humanists of the Erasmian school, Luther was compelled to admit those far-reaching implications, once he took up the Augustinian position as -against the Thomist. The Reformation broke out as a revolt against Rome. As such, it was promptly taken under patronage by the German Princes aspiring for secular power and

[17] See Mathew Arnold, *St, Paul and Protestantism.*

the German clergy envious of their Italian colleagues who-occupied all the higher positions in the hierarchy.

Another implication of Luther's original religious posi-tion was the doctrine of predestination. Since religious practices and other meritorious works were of no avail as regards the salvation of the soul, its future must be predetermined by Providence. The logical corollary was denial of free will. Oil that issue, Erasmus and other Humanists disowned the Reformation led by Luther. That was a break with the heretical tradition also, yet another reason for the Reformation to lose all religious significance and come under the secular influence of the German Princes. Ecclesiastically, the Reformation became a revolt of the German Church against papal Univer-salism. It lost its original religious significance when it was swamped by Luther's theological dogmas, and Lutheranism became the ideology of a nationalist chauvinism. "The idea even arose that a Christian spirit of life would, by God's special ordinance, spread from the German nation over the whole world, as once from Judea."[18]

The Reformation was, indeed, a nationalist movement; but its driving force was not the rising bourgeoisie. The agelong struggle for power between the Pope and the German Emperor was carried on under the flag of a revolt against the Roman Church. The newly elected Emperor, Charles V, became its chosen leader. Luther was the propagandist ancf theologian of the would-be autonomous German Church. He and his associates appealed to the new Emperor to dismiss his clerical advisers and govern with the counsel of Princes and temporal electors, not to entrust public business to prelates and financiers, but to the nobles. Then he would have the voice of the nation; he would no longer need the benediction of the Pope and his Cardinals; on the contrary, they would require imperial confirmation. "Then will the strong

[18] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

German nation arise with body and goods, and go with Thee to Rome, and make all Italy subject to Thee; then wilt Thou be a mighty King."

That was hardly the voice of the rising bourgeoisie— the founder of modern Democracy. The German National State would be modelled after the mediaeval monarchy of the Ottos with the ambition to be a theocratic *Imperium.* Addressing the Diet of Worms, convened symbolically on the day of the coronation of Charlemagne, the Emperor invoked the might of his mediaeval predecessors. "With the help of the monarchies, the powerful countries and the alliances which God had granted him, he hoped to raise it again to its ancient glory."[19] The Lutheran German clergy—those angels in revolt—were welcomed by the ambitious young Emperor as God-sent allies in his coming struggle for temporal power.

According to its official historian, Ranke, the Reformation was influenced by the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire and the German feudal States. Ever since Charlemagne was coronated by the Pope as the head of the resurrected Roman Empire, there had been a continuous struggle for supremacy between the temporal and spiritual power. The struggle was inherent in the constitution of the military-sacerdotal State called the Holy Roman Empire. The German Princes as the Electors of the Empire believed themselves to be occupying the position of the Roman Senators. Therefore, after the Pope and the Emperor, they were the most important factor in the constitution of the Empire. On the other hand, the clergy, mostly coming from Italy from the early days of the Empire, constituted themselves into an autonomous corporation, a State within the State. The conflict between the lords spiritual and temporal, which ulti-

[19] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

mately broke out as the Reformation, was voiced seven hundred years ago by Charlemagne himself.

Alarmed by the tendency of the clergy to usurp temporal power also, the founder of the Holy Empire reprimanded them for their ambition, and asked: How were they justified in interfering in secular affairs? What was meant by their renouncing the world? Whether that was consistent with large and costly retinues, with compelling the ignorant to make donations of their goods? Whether it was not better to foster good morals than to build Churches? These old questions were repeatedly asked throughout the succeeding centuries, and ultimately provided inspiration for the Reformation.

The questions implied the necessity for a revision of the constitution of the Empire. For a short period, under the three Ottos, the temporal lords gained the upper hand. German Popes were installed at the Vatican by Emperors who were Teutonic military chiefs. "The principle of the temporal government, autocracy, which from the earliest time had held in check the usurpation of ecclesiastical ambition, thus attained its culminating point, and was triumphantly asserted and recognised in the Empire."[20]

But by the end of the eleventh century, the relation changed; the universal supremacy of the Vatican was firmly established. The Holy Roman Empire, for all practical purposes, became a theocracy. Without a revision of the constitution of the Empire, the *status quo* could not be changed. The revision required by the temporal lords was to make autocracy prevail upon theocracy. Therefore, when the ferment in the religious life of mediaeval Europe ultimately broke out in Luther's revolt against the doctrine of papal infallibility, the right of the Church to intervene in the relation between man and God, the power of the hierarchy

[20]Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

and the privilege of the clergy, the temporal lords of Germany rushed to support it. Luther's famous theses proposed a revision of the constitution of the Empire, such as would free them from the fetters of Roman Universalism and papal theocracy.

A proposal for the formal revision of the constitution of the Empire had been made at the Diet of Basel nearly a hundred years before by Nicholas von Kus. Himself a Church dignitary, he maintained that it was impossible to reform the Church without revising the constitution of the Empire, because the two could not be separated even in thought. On that ground, he demanded the emancipation <of secular authority from ecclesiastical tutelage. He opposed the Pope's right to transfer the Empire from time to time to any man of his choice. Then, he proceeded to ascribe to the Empire a mystical relation with God and Christ, and absolute independence of the Church and even the right and duty of taking part in the ecclesiastical government. At the same time, he recommended constitutional checks and balances so as to limit the autocracy of the temporal power emancipated from the domination of the Church. But the temporal lords would not admit the least restriction of their power. The proposal of von Kus fell through. A similar effort was made at the time of Emperor Maximilian, with no better result. However, the Diet of Worms of 1495 did adopt some measures calculated to bring about a political union of Germany while preserving the ancient military-sacerdotal structure of the Empire. But internal dissension amongst the Princes and between them and the Emperor could not be settled. Consequently, papal predominance continued. Ultimately, the Reformation succeeded in setting up a rival Church with a new dogma, doctrinal authority and hierarchy, but not in revising the constitution of the Empire; nor could it reform the Roman Church. Luther and Calvin “did not want to break up

the unity of the Universal Church. They claimed to reform it by bringing over all Christians to their Church, which they considered the only true one, the Church of the Pope being in their eyes the Church of the Satan, those remaining in which would be damned."[21]

The dissatisfaction with the inadequacy and degeneration of institutionalised Christianity could not produce in Germany revolutionary and iconoclastic consequences as in Italy, because there even those who shared the feeling still thought in terms of religion, still looking for a belief which would satisfy reason.

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Towards the close of the Middle Ages, Germany was. not only the birthplace of printing; she was the home of a variety of arts and crafts which, on the one hand, brought into existence a numerous class of highly skilled urban workers, and on the other, a prosperous community of traders. Apart from the large army of anonymous architects and master-builders, who constructed the Gothic cathedrals and churches, there were organ-builders, wood carvers,, bronze engravers, metal workers, sculptors and painters, whose brilliant craftsmanship made Germany of that time famous throughout Europe. But in those days, individuals counted for nothing. Hundreds and thousands of creative workers, who produced imperishable objects of art as well as of ordinary usefulness, remained undifferentiated from families, castes, communities and guilds. Only a few names even of great artists could emerge from the twilight of mediaeval collectivism and be recognised in history as creative individuals, such as Albert Duerer, Peter Vischer and Hans Holbein, and the last had to flee to England to win international reputation as a great painter.

During the latter part of the fifteenth century,

[21] Seignobos, *The Rise of European Civilisation.*

Nuremberg was the Florence of Germany. It was a busy centre of trade and industry—a typical home of the rising bourgeoisie. As a centre of high finance, Augsburg also measured up with its Lombard rival. The powerful banking counter of the famous Fuggers, who held Emperors and Popes in heavy indebtedness, was situated there. Yet, neither of the great mediaeval German towns offered patronage to art and literature. Like in the rest of the country, there also the educated and wealthy people failed to outgrow the religious mentality. "With the coming of the Reformation,. an ill wind began to blow upon the sculptors and painters. The swift onrush of religious and social anarchy turned the minds of the German people into other channels. Religion, not art, was the governing interest. It is significant that Holbein, finding Basel too uncomfortable for a German painter, fled to the shelter of the English Court."[22]

Disowned by Erasmus and other Humanists, Luther-anism did 'not develop and spread as the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie; it won the patronage of the feudal Princes striving for secular power. When early in his career, Luther was proscribed both by the Pope and the Emperor, he was protected by the Elector of Saxony, who kept him in hiding for more than a year, during which time the doctrines of Protestantism were given the final shape. Originally motivated by the genuinely religious concern for the salvation of man's soul, the Reformation soon ceased to be a popular national movement. Otherwise, Germany would not be visited by the curse of the Thirty Years' War, which threw her back two centuries in political and economic evolution. The reformed religion became closely associated with the princely order and depended entirely on its patronage. That is why Luther so very fiercely opposed the Peasants' Revolt which heralded the coming of the bourgeois revolution.

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[22] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

The ideals of early Christianity preached by the heretical movements and also by the nascent Reformation, naturally had a strong appeal for the peasantry. Early in his career, Luther himself taught that all were children of one Divine Father, and equally redeemed by the blood of Christ. The peasants who in the blessedness of their time-honoured ignorance were still sincerely religious, naturally believed in Luther's message of liberation, and concluded therefrom that "there should be no inequality of wealth or station". But Luther had in the meantime moved away from his original genuinely religious position, and the Reformation had become a political and theological movement. While Sickingen with his mediaeval knights sponsored the cause of the peasantry, moved by their naive religious faith, the ideological herald of the bourgeois revolution condemned the rebellion, provoked by his own religious teachings, "as contrary to the divine and evangelical law, and therefore to the German nation"—the pretender to the succession of Israel as the chosen people of God.

Luther still professed to be the defender of the doctrine that the Gospel gave freedom to the soul, but now maintained that it did "not emancipate the body from restraint, or property from the control of laws..... A pious Christian, he said, should rather die a hundred deaths than give way one hair's breadth to the peasants' demand. The government should have no mercy; the day of wrath and of the sword was coming; and their duty to their God obliged them to strike hard as long as they could move a limb; whoever perished in this service, was a martyr of Christ. Thus, he (Luther) supported the temporal order of things with the same intrepidity that he had displayed in attacking the spiritual."[23]

As a religious movement, the Reformation was demo-

[23] Ranke, *History of the Reformation.*

cratic and libertarian. But it lost the original character when Luther degraded it to a doctrinal controversy of theology. His quarrel with the Pope "coincided with the appetites of secular Princes who cast covetous glances on the wealth of the Church."[24]

The Reformation succeeded as a negation of the time-honoured ideals and principles of the heretical movement, because for Luther, though a fanatically religious man, religious thought was a stagnant pool. He did not believe in enquiry or toleration. He firmly held that the final truth as to all problems of life was to be found in the Bible. Man was a helpless tool in the hands of God. He could do nothing to change his fate. Complete surrender to the mercy of God, and faith in Grace as the reward of faith, alone could save man's soul despite his inherent wickedness. Luther denounced a humanist Pope, Leo X, as the "Anti-Christ", while he was the anti-Humanist *par excellence.* "It is not, therefore, from Luther that the liberal and rationalising movements of European thought derived their origin."

Although the Protestant movement broke up into several sects, the anti-Humanist essence of Lutheran Reformation became most evident in Calvinism. The "*Institutio*" of the dictator of Geneva set forth the doctrines of the reformed religion: "If we contemplate man only in respect of his natural gifts, we find in him, from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, no trace whatever of goodness. ..... Even the best things that rise out of us are always made infect and vicious by the uncleanness of the flesh, and are always mingled with dirt." The dogma of predestination inherent in Luther's unbalanced reading of the Gospel of St. Paul, and extravagant interpretation of Augustin's doctrine of Grace, became the basic article of faith in Calvin's

[24] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

reformed religion. From "all eternity", God has chosen the elect for salvation; the merit of the chosen few had nothing to do with the Grace of God. A man may appear to be the devil incarnate, yet he may be among the elect chosen for salvation! One would be inclined to think that this extravagance of religiousity was meant to exonerate Calvin's own wickedness which went to the extent of declaring, "if we (the chosen elect of God) leave man to his own devices, his soul is capable of naught but evil." Man should, therefore, have no liberty, no freedom of will, because he can only misuse the privilege. Calvin's reformed religion was the code of prison house: every human being is primarily and perpetually inclined to evil, and therefore must be suspected *a priori* as a sinner and kept under strict supervision. "Wishing to elevate the divine as high as possible above the world, Calvin threw the worldly down into the lowest depth. Wishing to give supreme dignity to the idea of God, he degraded the idea of man."[25] For the Humanists of his time, such as Miguel Servetus, whom he sent to the stake, and Sebastian Castello, Calvin reserved epithets like "hissing serpents", "barking dogs", "Satan's spawn".

In the sixteenth century, Europe was infested, harrassed and tormented by the inhumanity and violence of the reformed religion, while the cruelty of the Jesuitic Counter-Reformation brutalised the flock still remaining faithful to the orthodox creed. The light of Humanism, which shone so lustrously during the preceding century, appeared to have dimmed almost to extinction, if not altogether extinguished. In reality, that however was not the case. The fire of man's resurgence kept on burning beneath the surface of theological pedantry, spiritual abasement and wanton ignorance in general, which characterised the intellectual life of Europe

[25] Stefan Zweig, *The Right to Heresy,*

during the 'years immediately following the Reformation. Neither Lutheranism nor Calvinism produced a single great thinker or scholar. Melanchthon was the first and last to deserve the distinction. But he as well as Zwingli began as Humanists. Towards the end of their career, Melanchthon could not pull on well with Luther. He was repelled particularly by the latter's violent opposition to free will.

Like many cultivated young men of the time, Sebastian Castello was attracted by what appeared to be Calvin's Stoic morality. One of the later Humanists, he was soon disillusioned and mercilessly persecuted by the zealot of Geneva. Castello's "Manifesto on Behalf of Toleration", issued in 1551 to protest against "Calvin's murder of Servetus", was a stirring Humanist document. Levelling against Calvin the deadly charge that by sending Servetus to the stakes he gave a lie to Luther's declaration that the Reformation stood for the "freedom of the Christian man", Castello wrote: "To seek truth and to utter what one believes to be true, can never be a crime. No one must be forced to accept a conviction. Conviction is free."

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The foundation of the Jesuitic order by Ignatius Loyola indicated that the spirit of the Renaissance had pervaded the whole of Europe. It was apprehended by the Pope and his hierarchy that, the experience of the Reformation having demonstrated the impossibility of reforming religion, of a return to the purity and simplicity of the original Christian faith, unbelief and despair would spread far and wide, preparing the intellectual atmosphere for a new spurt of Humanism. The "atheistic and Epicurean" view of life could not be stamped out. During the period Europe was dazed-by the revolt of the angels and its equally spectacular debacle, Humanism only marked time, all along undermining the spiritual foundation of the mediaeval society and Christian culture. It penetrated the educational institutions

to infect the mind of the youth. It was not for nothing, that Erasmus became the teacher of the sixteenth century. The men of the Renaissance brought learning out of the cloister and Universities; these were academic cloisters, because, there too, education was not secularised; they remained associated with, and were very largely dominated by, theology which, recognised as the highest of sciences even by Roger Bacon, had ever since retained that pre-eminence. A new system of imparting Humanist education was devised early in the fifteenth century by Vittorino de Feltre. Secular schools were founded not only to turn out lay scholars, but all-round citizens. The new system of education was based on the Greek idea of a harmonious development of mind and body. The men of the Renaissance had won the undeserved reputation of being immoral or, at any rate, insensible to the traditional codes of morality, because of their decisive rejection of the Christian ascetic notion of "our vile bodies". Not ashamed of their bodies, they were as much concerned with the cultivation of mind as with their physical life. That is why painting and sculpture reached with them such a sublime eminence. Careful observation and study of the human body for its symmetry and beauty, with reverence and affection, was the essential condition for the afflorescence of the Renaissance art. The rejection of conventional ethical notions led to the creation of new aesthetic values. The Humanist system of education spread throughout Europe, thanks to the services of men like Erasmus. "The Italian Renaissance brought forth no fairer proof, and none fraught with more important consequences for the liberal culture of the world, than the school training based on the ideas of Humanism, which took shape at that period."[26] "They first conceived and framed the education that has now prevailed through Europe for four centuries, moulding the youth of

[26] *Cambridge Modern History.*

diverse nations by one common discipline, and establishing an intellectual concord for all peoples.” “[7]

Loyola's keen eyes detected the danger of the Humanist education, which was setting up a new standard of values and creating new values. It was fostering the spirit of enquiry, encouraging scepticism, attaching greater importance to secular learning than to theology, and teaching the subordination of dogma to reason. The Jesuitic Order under Loyola's leadership planned to combat the insidious spread o£ Humanism by organising educational institutions. It was going to be a determined struggle with the Humanist teachers for the soul of the European youth. An extremely, sagacious man, working on a long-term plan, Loyola preferred to swim with the current. Excellent education was imparted; in the schools and colleges founded by the “Spanish Fathers”, In addition to the classical languages, science was also taught, with the result that Loyola's means defeated his end. Jesuit schools greatly helped the spread of modern education, including the rapidly growing scientific knowledge. Having: in a short time gained the reputation of able teachers, Jesuit Fathers were invited to fill up chairs in the old Universities.

At the same time, the most powerful solvent of the religious mode of thought was in operation. Paracelsus followed Copernicus, and half a century before the latter, Nicolaus Cusanus had arrived at the conclusion that the earth was a sphere rotating on its own axis. Tycho Brahe's Rudolphine. Tables contributed greatly to the rise of astronomy. Galileo and Kepler had been conducting their studies during the closing decades of the barren sixteenth century. Jansen invented the microscope, van Helmount conducted the study of nature, and Gilbert discovered electric friction and the earth's magnetism. The century closed with the martyrdom, of Bruno.

The intellectual life, which distinguished the seventeenth;

[27] J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy.*

century as the beginning of the modern age, was stirring in the womb of the sixteenth, notwithstanding the latter's apparent spiritual exhaustion. The discovery of nature by science enabled man to dispense with the necessity of assuming or postulating supernatural powers and thus evolving a religious faith to satisfy reason. The dawning knowledge about the mechanism of the observed natural and physical processes (the movement of celestial bodies and the swing of the pendulum) lifted at least a corner of the veil of mystery shrouding the universal order. Man began to feel that after all he might not be a helpless puppet in the hand of an inscrutable Providence. The experience of the power to know what lay behind the veil of the mysteries of nature awakened in him the feeling of power to do what until then was believed to be beyond human ability. The recollection of the achievements of an Archimedes and the fresh memory of the soaring vision of Leonardo da Vinci encouraged the conviction that, with an increasing knowledge about the mechanism of nature, man would acquire the power to control the forces of nature. A new vista opened up before man's creative genius. He could not only create imperishable artistic and literary treasures, but might dream, as Leonardo did, of mastering the mechanism of nature and eventually recreating the world to his liking. For the first time in his history, man, inspired with the creative spirit of the Renaissance, and the vision of power to be born of expanding Scientific knowledge, felt himself in harmony with the grandiose conception of a law-governed Universe, because it no longer reduced him to an insignificant, helpless, cog in the remorseless wheel of fate, which was to be accepted as the Grace of an insensible God. That sublime feeling of creative power was, indeed, still limited to a few, but those few were blazing a trail out of a dark past and a dull present towards a future full of hope and promise.

The debacle of the revolt of the angels marked the end

<*oi* the age of faith in the history of European humanity. It justified the revolt of man. It revealed the necessity more pointedly than ever before. The choice was between God and man. Religion could not be reformed. The coveted return to the purity and simplicity of primitive faith, born of the frustrated rationality of *homo sapiens,* turned out to be an unattainable ideal. To hold its sway in a complicated society, any religion must be institutionalised, and the doctrines and dogmas of an organised institutionalised religion could not have the charm and spell of a simple faith which once satisfied the embryonic reason of the primitive man. Religion, therefore, could no longer elevate man above the. selfishness, vulgarity and ugliness of life to the beatitude of an imaginary communion with God. It only debased and degraded man either to a slave of the priest or an abject believer in predestination, a helpless reed tossed in the uncharted sea of fate dictated by the arbitrariness of an inscrutable Providence. The alternative for man was to revolt, to throw off the tutelage of God, stand on his own feet, take destiny in his own hands.

The Renaissance had blazed that trail of spiritual revolt. The Reformation dissolved the decayed Christian Universal Order. The ultimate defeat of God's agents on earth in the struggle for the monopoly of temporal power, encouraged man's striving for spiritual freedom. The Holy Empire was broken up into National States; and there was a parallel development of immensely greater historical significance. Ecclesiastical laws were replaced by secular laws, made by men. God's government on earth was superceded by governments of men. On the breakdown of the time-honoured religious order, a moral order, with no theological or supernatural sanction, became the ideal of man. The striving for the attainment of that new ideal was the motive force of the intellectual efforts, social conquests and cultural achievements of the following two centuries.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURAL LAW

THE intellectual stagnation of the period immediately following upon the Reformation was more apparent than real. Luther's violence and Calvin's bigotry had repelled sensitive souls from the time-honoured theological studies,, which were until then regarded as the foremost intellectual pursuit. The latter part of the sixteenth century was indeed conspicuous for the absence of any outstanding work of literature or fine art. But at the same time, science advanced silently, ushering in a new era of intellectual achievements. Before the century was out, heliocentric astronomy was definitely established as a landmark in the history of thought. Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Galileo—all those founders of modern science lived in the sixteenth century. Early in the next century, Lippershay, a Dutch optician, manufactured the first telescope. Galileo quickly saw the great importance of the new instrument, and himself manufactured a better one. Though still very primitive, it enabled him to survey the heavens and discover phenomena of celestial movement which placed the new science of heliocentric astronomy on a solid foundation. Philosophically, Galileo's discovery had a staggering effect; it shook the tradition of Aristotle's authority. In his famous book, *A Dialogue of the Two Systems of the World,* which caused imprisonment of the aged savant until death, he expounded the heliocentric view so very cogently that the Aristotelian philosopher "Simplicio", who defended Ptolemian geocentrism, was made to look like~ a fool. Galileo thus not only established modern astronomy j he also laid the foundation of modern physics to be elaborated by Descartes and Newton.

The significance of the discovery of America was soon-

followed by Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe, which empirically proved that the earth was round. Another death-blow to the biblical mythology. It naturally had a repercussion on the awe-inspiring structure of theology which for centuries had claimed to be the queen of sciences. Finally there was the far-reaching revolutionary effect of the invention of printing by Gutenberg early in the fifteenth century. .Having overcome the initial technical difficulties, the art of printing spread throughout Europe as the most effective medium for the dissemination of learning and knowledge. By the sixteenth century, printing of books in large numbers lad become a regular industry in all the civilised countries of Europe.

The advance of science laid the foundation of a mechanistic cosmology, which was the *conditio sine qua non* for liberating human mind from the tradition of the religious mode of thought. The art of printing was instrumental in carrying the message of freedom far and wide. The new-intellectual upsurge, therefore, did not remain limited to cloisters and universities. A large section of the European humanity, practically the entire literate laity, was caught in the new current. Consequently, the time-honoured belief in a theological order of the Universe was shaken, and the cultural atmosphere became congenial for a new intellectual outlook—the conception of a world order governed by Natural Law.

Meanwhile, the humanist education had been spreading, with the result that the cultivated man's mind was becoming more receptive to the iconoclastic scientific knowledge and responsive to its liberating appeal. "The sense of human dignity was the chief moral agent of antiquity, and the sense of sin of mediaevalism..... It was not till the revival of learning had been considerably advanced, that a perception of the nobility of the heroic character dawned upon man's mind. Then, for the first time, the ecclesiastic type was obs-

cured, a new standard and aspiration appeared, and popular enthusiasm taking a new direction achieved that political liberty which, once created, intesified the tendency that produced it."[1]

The new era was ushered in by a new type of man, no longer concerned with the baffling mystery of man's relation with God, but with secular affairs. They approached the problems of human existence no longer from the theological, but from a rational and moral point of view. Having quietly set aside the fiction of a divine Providence, or supernatural sanction, they looked for a secular authority for the conduct and governance of human affairs. For centuries previously, leaders of thought had been preoccupied with the problem of man's relation with God and salvation of his soul; they claimed to solve the mystery of how a spiritual power intervened in terrestrial matters, and the competence to legislate for the government of God. The intellectual leaders, who ushered in the new era, were concerned with the secular problem of harmonising human relations. They conceived the task of the time as follows: "We have now to find human authority promoting intellectual advancement, and accepting as its maxim that the lot of man will be ameliorated, and his power and dignity increased, in proportion as he is able to comprehend the mechanism of the world, the action of natural laws, and to apply physical forces to his use."[2]

The secularisation of politics was the outstanding feature of the new age. Political theories and economic doctrines were dissociated from the theological preoccupation and freed from ecclesiastical supremacy. The former were formulated on the basis of terrestrial sanctions, and the latter developed with a view to human welfare. Politics was secularised by repudiating the mediaeval doctrine of the divine right of

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[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe.*

[2] J. W. Draper, *The Intellectual Development of Europe.*

kings. The conception of the Natural Law and the hypothesis of a social contract provided the new sanction for secular authorities—of political administration and social organisation. The sixteenth century saw the disintegration of the universalism of the Roman Church; the parallel process was the practical disappearance of the Holy Empire. Since the time of Charlemagne, the Pope and the Emperor were the dual heads of a theocratic State—the would-be Christian World Order. After six hundred years of a continuous struggle for supremacy, both the powers, the temporal of the Emperor as well as the spiritual of the Pope, were reduced to a shadowy existence. The establishment of sovereign National States in England, France and subsequently in other countries, had already put an end to the pretension of the Emperor. The Reformation laid low the Universalism of the Roman Church, and still further disrupted even the formal status of the Holy Empire. The Middle Age of the Christian theocratic order was at its end. It must give place to a new order in which science was to supercede faith, man-made laws and terrestial considerations were to regulate the inter-relations of secular political communities and also of their citizens.

A new type of men—sceptics, critics, out-and-out atheists, avowed materialists, such as Bodin, Montaigne, Descartes, Bayle, Gassendi, Hobbes, Bacon—shouldered their way to the forefront of European history until then crowded with priests, prelates, popes and princes. The apparent intellectual stagnation of the sixteenth century was broken by a flood-tide of spiritual exuberance. The intellectual and cultural structure of the mediaeval society collapsed under the critical onslaught, particularly of three men, each wielding a different weapon. Montaigne's scepticism surveyed the surrounding institutional patterns and examined the variety of traditional opinions from the point of view of the sophisticated man of the world, who was not to be taken in by time-honoured

facades nor fall for fetishes. Rather superficial, Montaigne's criticism was nonetheless devastating, because it appealed to the ordinary intelligence. Descartes laid the axe of his critique at the roots of theology, which had for centuries kept the cultivated mind spell-bound, and ravished rationalism. The Cartesian method threw all venerable notions into the crucible of scepticism which dissolved everything except the confidence in one's own judgment guided by self-evident empirical truths. Descartes provided Humanism with a sound philosophical foundation. Bayle's was the scepticism of a scholar. Often showing a Voltairean scintillation, he did not stop short of cynicism, although always with the dignity of scholarliness. Bayle, the Sceptic, was the founder of modern criticism. His was the deadly art of arguing out old systems of thought with the object of laying bare their logical fallacies and to expose their absurdities. Before the threefold assault, mediaevalism lay in ruins—the religious mode of thought torn asunder from its mooring of blind faith, rationalism ashamed of its illicit love with the mystic and obscurantist theology, classicism exposed as barren learning and cultural artificiality. The intellectual atmosphere was clear for creative minds to breathe in freely, to formulate new principles of law, to evolve new political theories, to visualise new ideals of social evolution, and to conceive of new cultural patterns. The revolt of man against the Frankenstein of religion and teleological order, created by his infantile rationalism, and the revival of science giving him the sense of creative power born of knowledge, ushered in the modern civilisation with incalculable potentialities, of good and evil, to unfold during the succeeding centuries. The publication in 1625 of *The Law of War and Peace* by Grotius has been described as the beginning of the epoch of the modern political system of Europe. At the close of the Middle Ages, Europe was in a state of lawlessness; it was a war of all against all. The military-sacerdotal order

founded by Charlemagne having disintegrated owing to its internal discord, there was no recognised authority except of violence, fanaticism and orthodoxy. The laws of the ecclesiastical government had lost authority with all who claimed the freedom of conscience and the right of individual judgment. The laws of the Empire were there only to be flouted by all who dared. Coming out of the decayed mediaeval order, Renaissance Europe needed a new system of law with a rational, secular and moral sanction. The work of Grotius satisfied the need. The new sanction was found in the old notion of the Natural Law. It appealed to the Protestants and Catholics alike. The latter, on the authority of Thomas Aquinas, regarded the Natural Law as the "unrevealed law of God"; the Protestants would not accept that authority, but they were respectful to the positivism of the Roman Jurists who also appealed to the Law of Nature. The work of Grotius obtained "the enthusiastic assent of Europe,"[3] because it laid "the foundations of moral and legal justice, which learned men would deem sound, and men of the world would not think fantastic."[4] Grotius was a Humanist of scholastic learning. As such, he could produce a treatise on law which won the approbation of the philosophically inclined ecclesiastical Jurists, and also of the Renaissance law-years who drew inspiration from the tradition of Cicero. All through the Middle Ages, law was referred to the divine origin. In the late sixteenth century,' there was a profound change in the conception of law in consequence of the importance attached to human personality. Far-reaching conclusions flowed from the dignity and autonomy attributed to every human being. "Several conclusions arc directly derived from this assumption. It explains the claim

which the individual makes, and the duty which he admits.

[3] Henry Maine, *Ancient Laws.*

[4] *Cambridge Modern History.*

that Reason should be acknowledged to be the Natural—which is also to say, the Divine—Law. Again, it provides the foundation of all human legal institutions, which thus become directly identical, in the last analysis, with moral principles. Finally, it furnishes the ideal of a single organisation or society of all mankind."[5]

In consequence of that profound change, the old conception of Natural Law was freed from the authority of God, and referred to human reason. Grotius developed that new conception of Natural Law. He defined it as "a dictate of Right Reason which points out that an act according as it is or is not in conformity with rational nature, has in it a quality of moral baseness or moral necessity; and that, in consequence, such an act is either forbidden or enjoined by the author of nature, God."[6]

In short, the Advocate-General of the Netherlands outlined a system of law which, based upon the entire experience of the past, incorporating its positive outcome, met the requirements of the new situation. Grotius was a Protestant. But he was also a colleague of Erasmus, and with the latter had been repelled by the Reformation, "believing that, all things considered, it had done more harm than good"[5] Experience had proved that the Church could not be reformed, that progressive ideas and movements must transcend the limits of the religious mode of thought. Grotius lived when all thoughtful men "asked what was the difference between the vindictiveness with which Rome dealt (with dissenters) and the rigour of Calvin who seized Servetus and committed him to the flames..... There was not a pious or thoughtful man in all reformed Europe who was not shocked when the circumstances under which the

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[5] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Ideas of 'Natural Law and Humanity in World Politics.*

[6] Hugo Grotius, *Prolegomena.*

[7] J. W. Draper, *The Intellectual Development of Europe.*

unhappy physician had been brought to the stake were made known."[8]

Grotius was a man of the Renaissance—one of those who cultivated the humanist spirit and spread humanist learning when Europe appeared to be in a state of intellectual stagna-nation. At the same time, he represented the positive aspect of the Reformation—the revolt against authority and assertion of the claim to personal enquiry and judgment. Unity is antagonistic to liberty. The Universalism of the Catholic Church meant spiritual slavery for the individual believer. By disrupting that monolithic structure of institutionalised religion, the Reformation served the cause of spiritual freedom, even though it advanced an alternative totalitarianism. But once the spell of religious unity was broken, it could not be re-established. Protestantism triumphed in the emergence of numerous sects which could not justify their fissiparous existence without admitting the right of criticism and freedom of conscience. The disappearance of a coercive unity promoted the cause of liberty. That was the positive significance of the Reformation. Grotius was one of the Humanists who knew how to appreciate that legacy.

The conception of the Natural Law was a landmark in the history of man's struggle for freedom. It liberated him from the faith in the supernatural—a power which he can never comprehend nor overcome, because it is imaginary; on the other hand, the Natural Law belongs to his world; therefore, eventually, he will be able to understand how it operates, and consequently live in harmony with it. The notion of the Natural Law is empirically derived; there is nothing mysterious about it. The regularities of nature are the facts of man's experience. The notion of Natural Law, therefore, results from the innate rationality of man. Religion also originated in that notion. In course of man's in-

[6] *ibid.*

tellectual development, it appeared in different forms. It is a human heritage and as such, enriched by expanding scientific knowledge, entered into the structure of the ideological foundation of modern civilisation.

The notion of the Natural Law became the guiding principle of the intellectual life which ushered in the age of modern civilisation, because it had originated with the fathers of science and philosophy—the naturalist thinkers of ancient Greece. The revival of science naturally revivified the idea which was the point of departure of the earliest enquiry into the causes of natural phenomena and therefore of philosophical thought. In Greek mythology and epics, Fate or Destiny was of greater importance than the gods—the latter being also subject to the former. Neither was Fate a super-divine force nor were the gods supernatural. Nature was the ultimate reality; nothing existed beyond and outside it. The gods themselves were subject to the law of nature. "Fate exercised a great influence in all Greek thought, and perhaps was one of the sources from which science derived the belief in natural law."[9]

The notion of fate was the primitive conception of determinism—that nature was not a chaotic combination of diverse and conflicting phenomena, nor was it subject to any arbitrary supernatural Providence; it was a law-governed system. Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitos and other naturalist thinkers assumed that everything came out of one single primal substance, which was infinite and eternal. They conceived the basic substance differently, Thales as water, Heraclitos as fire, so on and so forth. But all of them held that the original substance differentiated itself into the multifarious substances of experience, these were transformed into each other, and again all merged in their common source. This process of the being and becoming of the world was believed to be due to the operation of the Law of Nature, which appeared

[9] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

as the concept of "Justice" in ancient Greek thought. Justice was conceived as keeping balance—in every sphere of existence. To be just was to be in harmony with the Law of Nature. Justice was identical also with virtue. Ethics was deduced from physics, because man was a part of nature.

This highly interesting philosophical idea was elaborated subsequently by Epicuros. It has still to be fully grasped by the philosophy of our time. However, the point is that the notion of the Natural Law represented the belief in physical determinism; it was reason in nature, and also the fundamental moral category; "but this supreme power was not itself personal, and was not a supreme god."[10] The profound philosophical implication of the concept of Natural Law had been developed by Aristotle and the Stoics, apart from the Epicureans.

Treating the concept of Natural Law as "Justice", Aristotle came to the conclusion that it was a necessary element of the State; but he differentiated "conventional justice" from "natural justice". While the former, guided by reason and convenience, laid down definite rules, the latter's authority was independent of opinion, being valid under all circumstances as the guiding principle of civilised life. Evidently, according to Aristotle, the concept of Natural Law in the philosophical sense implied that there was a rational design in nature, and that man-made laws, together with the rest of human behaviour, should conform with that rational design. That is how justice and virtue could be realised in life.

The idea of Natural Law was further elaborated by the Stoics into an ethical system; they derived morality from rationality, which was referred back to the Law of Nature. They maintained: "Every creature has its own nature and its own appropriate functions, and for man—whose nature is to be citizen—the Law of Nature is the sum of the prin-

[10] Russell, *Ibid.*

ciples, founded in human nature, which determine the conduct befitting him in his rational and social quality."[11] The Stoics further held that, by nature, all men were free and equal. The Law of Nature was supreme and eternal, therefore precedent to all enactments of any human authority. Even religion connoted obedience to the all-pervading Reason, which was the Law of Nature. Roman Jurists since the time of Cicero based their doctrines on the Stoic concept of the Natural Law. Cicero declared that the Roman Republic had approximated the Stoic ideal of the "Natural State" and the laws of the Republic were in full harmony with the Law of Nature.

The concept of the Natural Law ceased to be a matter of philosophical speculation. It became the metaphysical sanction of legislation, and the State derived its moral authority therefrom. It was in this sense that Natural Law became the point of departure of political theories at the close of the Middle Ages. The Roman Jurists modified the original Greek version in order to harmonise it with the established sociopolitical order. The Stoics held that equality and freedom were the essence of Natural Law; the Roman lawyers dropped the idea of equality and declared that all men were free before the law of Nature. Neverthelss, both the versions of the venerable principle were known throughout the Middle Ages. Not only were the heretical movements inspired by the doctrine that equality and freedom were of the essence of the Natural Law; it was endorsed by the early Church Fathers also. St. Ambrose, for example, defended the original Greek conception as against the interpretation by the Roman lawyears. He declared that "private property is not an institution of nature. Nature knows only common property; she gave all things to all men. Usurpation and greed created the law of private property." That was an echo of Cicero's voice raised several centuries ago: "Nations and

[11] Pollock, *Essays in Law.*

princes may make laws, but they are without the true character of law if they are not derived from the original source of law, which existed before the State was established. Private property is unknown to nature."[12] Again, "There is a law which is identical with true reason, and which is in harmony with nature. It is eternal and unchallengeable and is the expression and the command of the divine authority."[13]

As a matter of fact, the entire Christian theology, until it had to compromise with the positive (man-made) law of the Roman Empire, was based upon the doctrine of Natural Law. First, there was the Golden Age (the State of Nature); the fall of man was followed by a moral crisis—the vale of tears and life of sin, to last for a millennium; redemption was to come thereafter; the Natural Law operating as the Law of Reason, would enable man to overcome the moral crisis and return to Grace. The law of Reason was to restrain the evils in man. But in course of time, it was reinforced by the Canon Laws of the ecclesiastical government compiled in the sixth century by St. Isidore of Seville. These also claimed the sanction of the Natural Law, which was recognised in the theology of the Roman State religion as the "Unrevealed Law of God." Finally, came the Positive Law (Roman Law) to justify the actual conditions of life, which were so very different from the biblical picture of the world waiting for redemption after the millennium.

The purpose of the Positive Law was to protect the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong. It legalised private property, but offered protection to the weak and the poor. It proposed to prevent the war of all against all, and to protect the fruits of labour against robbery. According to the Roman Jurists, the State was created for the benefit of all. They declared that nobody should have a superfluity so

[12] Cicero. *De Republics*

[13] *lbid.*

long as there were men who lacked the most necessary things. Such a system of law, even if made by man, could legitimately claim the sanction of the Law of Nature conceived by the early Greek philosophers as "Justice," and subsequently, by the Stoics, as connoting equality and freedom. Owing to its obvious justness and equity, the Roman Law came to be an important element of the cultural heritage of Europe, ultimately to provide the fathers of modern political theories with a sound point of departure.

When Christianity became the State religion of the Roman Empire, and the latter established a terrestrial order in place of the chaos created by the fall of the antique civilisation, the biblical faith in the Millennium was abandoned imperceptibly by the Fathers of the Church. Instead of nearing the predestined end, the world appeared to be showing unmistakable signs of a much longer life; consequently, the pessimistic view, born out of the chaotic conditions of a social crisis, had to be adjusted to the altered perspective. It became necessary to find a compromise between the Natural Law and the Positive Law given for the administration of the affairs of the world, which did not seem to be moving towards an early end. St. Ambrose himself qualified his views quoted above by the following proviso: "But it does not follow from this that private property is a bad thing; the doctrine of Natural Law only requires that the rich should support the poor with a portion of the goods which were originally the common possession of all." And the Prince of the Patristic literature, St. Augustine, defended the Positive Law enacted for the administration of worldly affairs against the criticism of the Manichaeists—those unmitigated votaries of the early Christian other-worldliness. "Private property in itself is not an evil, but the evil lay in passionate chase after riches, the accumulation of property, the elevation of material possessions over truth, justice, wisdom, faith, love of God and man, or even placing

property on the same level as these ideal virtues."[14] The historical significance of the defence of Positive Law on the authority of the Natural Law, conceived later as the "Un-revealed Law of God," is fully appreciated when it is ife-membered that 1,500 years later the prophet of modern Communism rejected the docrtine that "private property is theft" and wrote a whole book to criticise the *Philosophic de la Misere* as *Poverty of Philosophy.*

Nevertheless, doubt about the inter-relation of the Natural Law, the Canon Law and the Positive Law, continued to confuse scholasticism until the thirteenth century, when the great mediaeval jurist Gratian cleared away the contradictions of the work of his predecessor, St. Isidore. The latter had given a misleading definition of the Natural Law by mixing up the original Greek version and the interpretation of the Roman Jurists. Gratian took up what today could be called a Marxist position, so many centuries before Hegel provided his pupil with the dialectics of histori-cism. The mediaeval dialectician held that "private property is sinful, but necessary; therefore, ownership should be restricted to what is necessary." That was certainly an improvement on Hegelian Positivism, which dominates the revolutionary social philosophy of our time: according to the Hegelian formula, taken over in Marxism, the third term of the syllogism should have been, "therefore, private property is good", because whatever is necessary, is justifiable, and therefore good.

The conception of the Natural Law had survived the vicissitudes of the Roman Empire; but in the meantime, Christian theology had outgrown the Hellenistic inclination of the early Church Fathers. The appeal to Reason, unsupported by authority, no longer carried conviction. But on the other hand, the study of Aristotle had become an impor-

[14] St. Augustine, *City of God.*

tant part of scholastic learning. The authority of "the philosopher and also of Cicero had added importance to the concept of the Natural Law. It had, therefore, to be fitted into the system of Christian faith. Gratian was an ecclesiast; but a greater authority than that of a casuist was called for. St. Thomas Aquinas declared that the Natural Law was the "Unrevealed Law of God," and as such immutable, and supreme over all other law. With the endorsement of the rationalist Occam, the Thomist definition of the Natural Law became an important factor of mediaeval thought, subsequently to become the point of departure of modern political theories. As a matter of fact, the sanction for the doctrine of the sacred right of revolt can be found in St. Thomas Aquinas, who categorically asserted "the right of subjects to withhold their obedience from rulers who were usurpers and unjust."[15]

Grotius reared his legal system for a new political order on the foundation of the tradition of the ancient and mediaeval thought about the origin of human rights and the source of laws to guard them. "The doctrine of natural right, as it appears in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth, centuries, is a revival of a Stoic doctrine, though with important modifications. It was the Stoic who distinguished *jus naturale* from *jus gentium.* Natural Law was derived from the first principles of the kind held to underlie all general knowledge. By nature, the Stoics held, all human beings are equal..... Christianity took over this part of Stoic teaching along with much of the rest. And when at last, in the seventeenth century, the opportunity came to combat despotism effectively, the Stoic doctrines of Natural Law and natural equality, in their Christian dress, acquired a political force which, in antiquity, not even an Emperor could give them."[16] Marcus Aurelius was the Emperor who tried unsuccessfully

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[15] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae.*

[16] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy.*

to enforce equal right and equal freedom according to the doctrine of the Natural Law.

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At this point, some digression is warranted to examine the social background of Grotius. Did he not formulate the new theory of law to justify the rise of the bourgeois Dutch Republic? There is no evidence to show that the writing of his *Law of War and Peace* had any direct connection with that dramatic event. And even if that was the case, it would be pointless to emphasise it. Because, the role of the trading and industrial classes in the revolt of the Spanish Provinces of the Netherlands was insignificant. The Dutch Republic was not a creation of the bourgeoisie.

Originally, the revolt was not against the Spanish rule. When King Philip II left for Spain, the Government of the Netherlands was delegated to the Duchess of Parma, a natural daughter of Emperor Charles V by a Flemish mistress. She would have been accepted as a legitimate ruler, had the native nobility been allowed to conduct the government. That wise course was not adopted. A Council of three headed by Cardinal Granvelle was appointed to rule in behalf of the King. The native nobility felt deprived of their natural right to rule, and revolted not against the Spanish King, but against the Granvelle camarilla. The rising bourgeoisie had nothing to do with that event, which led to the rise of the Dutch Republic. "Proud and wealthy native noblemen, who had served the State under Charles V, asked themselves how long these outrages were to be endured, and when they were to be admitted to a legitimate share in the influence and the spoils of government, from which they were excluded by the unpopular Cardinal and his associates."[17] That was not a new class "beginning the struggle for political power. The revolt was led by Egmont, a professional soldier, the Count of Hoorn,

[17] H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe.*

and William Nassau, Prince of Orange— "the three men who, in the recent troubles, had most helped the maintenance of order."[18]

Additional causes of the revolt were the anti-heresy edicts and the order that the people of the Netherlands should accept the Catholic doctrine of the Council of Trent. With a solemn protest against religious persecution, drawn up by the Prince of Orange, Egmont personally went to see the King. On the failure of his mission, young noblemen, bigotted Calvinists like Marnix, and humane Catholics like Brederode, joined the revolt. The flame was fanned into a widespread conflagration when Egmont and Hoorn, taken prisoner by treachery, were publicly beheaded. But not until a tax was imposed to pay Alva's troops did the commercial community join the revolt. After the foundation of the Dutch Republic in 1572, with a democratic Constitution, the trading and industrial classes tightened up their purse-strings. The Republican army of the Prince of Orange suffered defeat after defeat, because it was ill paid, his treasury being empty. While the peasants of Friesia, the canons of Utrecht and the nobles of Gelderland were the mainstay of the original Republic, the burgher aristocracy of the trading cities of Brabant and Flanders did not come in until the Duke of Parma succeeded Alva and advised the King to recognise the Republic founded by the Prince of Orange with the support of the native nobility.

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Grotius, however, was not the first to formulate a modern political theory on the basis of a secular authority. As early as in 1324, Marsiglio of Padua improved upon the Aristotelian theory of the State. His ideas were so very remarkably ahead of his time, though based on ancient wisdom, that he has been described as "the most modern of all the

[18] *Ibid.*

mediaevals."[19] Rejecting all authority, Marsiglio based his political theory on facts. He boldly expressed the opinion that the source of law was not the divine right of rulers, nor the superior wisdom of the learned, but the common sense of the whole body of citizens. "We declare that, according to the truth, and to the opinion of Aristotle, the Law-Giver, the primary essential and the efficient source of law is the People, or a majority of them, acting of their own free choice openly declared, in a general assembly of citizens, and prescribing something to be done or not done in regard to civil affairs under penalty of temporal punishment. The truth of a proposition is more accurately judged and its usefulness to the community more carefully taken into account, when the whole body of citizens apply their intelligence."[20] Those basic principles of the parliamentary democratic system were enunciated so much ahead of time, by a mediaeval jurist, while the bourgeoisie were hardly out of their swaddling clothes. Marsiglio calmly ignored the pretensions of the Holy Empire as well as the authority of the Pope, and declared that law for the governance of this world must have the sanction of a secular authority, which, according to the Natural Law, was vested in the people. He argued that positive laws were "the reasoned application of the Natural Law."

In the Introduction to his book, Marsiglio states that it was written as a supplement to Aristotle's *Politics.* But formally following the Aristotelian principles, he reached conclusions which were most repugnant to the mediaeval interpreters of the philosopher. In fact, Marsiglio's conclusions were influenced by the clearly naturalist and rationalist principles of Latin Averroism as distinct from the interpretation of the Nominalists of the Paris University, where, also on the authority of the Arab philosopher, an attempt was made to marry reason with faith. Marsiglio argued that faith

[19] E. Emerton, *Harvard Theological Studies.*

[20] Marsiglio, *Defensor Pacts.*

should not be vulgarised by the association with reason. Because, the one is concerned with the life after death, while the other is a secular category. The faith may be useful for the salvation of the soul, but it is simply irrelevant in the consideration of the affairs of this world. That was a roundabout way of declaring that secular questions must be decided by the dictates of reason without any reference to faith. It is clear how Marsiglio's separation of reason from faith was bound to lead logically to scepticism as regards religion, and secularisation of politics. "Human law is a command of the whole body of citizens, or of its prevailing part, arising directly from the deliberations of those empowered to make law, about voluntary acts of human beings to be done or avoided in this world, for the sake of attaining the best end, or some condition desirable for man in this world. I mean, a command the transgression of which is enforced in this world by penalty or punishment imposed on the transgressor."[21]

In the sixteenth century, before Grotius, a succession of great lawyers devoted their intellect to a new examination of the Roman Law from the point of view of the conditions of their time. The most famous among them were Nicholas of Cusa, John Gerson, Johannes Althusius and Jean Bodin.

Althusius was a Calvinist. Nevertheless, in his work the relation between theology and the Natural Law appears to be very ambiguous. He maintained that the original association of men was a natural process, being an integral part of human nature. Therefore, it is not to be explained by any *ad hoc* assumption such as social contract,[22] the implication of which argument was that society was not a divine creation, but resulted from the operation of the law of nature.

Bodin's monumental work, *Republic,* was hailed as the most complete and systematic treatise on politics since Aristotle. In the tradition of Marsiglio, Bodin demanded sub~

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[21] *ibid.*

[22] Otto von Gierke, *Johannes Althusius.*

ordination of the ecclesiastical power to the sovereignty of the secular State based on Positive Law. Discussing the question of sovereignty, Bodin maintained that usurpation was the origin of monarchy (the only sovereign power known at that time). Rejecting the distinction made by Aristotle between a king and a tyrant, he held that a king governed according to the Law of Nature, whereas a tyrant outraged it. Ideas of law, sovereignty, administration, were in the melting pot. A comprehensive political philosophy was the need of the tune. The classical concept of the Natural Law as the source of all authority, provided the common point of departure. But how did the State originate? How did the Law of Nature operate so as to provide sanction for a secular authority? How was the concept of Natural Law to be brought down from the realm of metaphysical speculation, and itself be secularised? "From a philosophical investigation of these questions, the lawyers passed by an inevitable transition to an examination of the origin of government, a subject which they pursued from their own point of view, as energetically as the theologians."[23] Hobbes, a contemporary of Grotius, produced a comprehensive political philosophy.

Two conflicting implications were inherent in the old notion of Natural Law inherited from the Stoics and elaborated by the Roman Jurists. "On the one hand, there was a theory of limitations upon human activities imposed by Reason in view of human nature, and on the other hand, there was a theory of moral qualities inherent in human beings, or natural rights, demonstrated by Reason as deduced from human nature."[24] In the new conception of law expounded by the predecessors of Grotius, the two theories were mixed up. Grotius cleared up the confusion with the argument that the purpose of law was not to limit human rights and human activities, but to enable man to act on his

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[23] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe.*

[24] Roscoe Pound, *The Spirit of the Common Law.*

own responsibility. That was a clear break with the mediaeval notion of law, which stiffled man's creativeness and precluded the responsibility on his part to make moral judgments. Grotius held that certain qualities inherent in man recognised the Natural Law. "The mother of Natural Law is human nature itself. For, the very nature of man, which, even if we had no lack of anything, would lead us into the mutual relations of society, is the mother of the Law of Nature. Among the properties which are pecular to man is a desire for society, and not only so, but for a life spent tranquilly and rationally. The assertion that by nature each seeks only his own advantage cannot be conceded. And this tendency to the conservation of society is the source of *jus* or Natural Law. Natural Law would remain if there were no God."[25]

Grotius went to the extent of saying that the will of God was always in addition to the Natural Law; it could never contradict the latter. "Just as God cannot make twice two not be four, he cannot make that which is intrinsically bad not to be bad." Grotius insists upon the social and rational nature of man. Natural Law is founded upon the primitive altruistic instinct and also the rational nature of man. By implication, Grotius holds that certain things are right and others wrong in their own nature, that is, apart from the will of God. The doctrine of Natural Law has always been based on an appeal to reason; Grotius cleared the concept of reason from all mystic and transcendental connotation, and defined it as a property of the human mind. Thus, the old notion of Natural Law as elaborated by him provided a rational method for the making of positive laws for the guidance of the political organisation of society.

Man's age-long struggle for freedom at last brought about an eclipse of theology and a quiet disregard for eccles-stical authority. Aspiration for political liberty became the

[25] Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli et Pacts.*

Jiew incentive of the struggle. There must be a mighty revolt against "Voluntary Servitude". A book bearing this title was published by Montaigne, its author, La Boetie, having died at the age of thirty-two. The following passage quoted from that book breathes the spirit of the age:

"Wretched and insensate people, enamoured of your misery and blind to your interests, you suffer your property to be pillaged, your fields devastated, and your houses stripped of their goods, and all this by one whom you yourselves raised to power, and whose dignity you maintain with your lives! Yours arc the many eyes that spy your acts, the many hands that strike you, the many feet that trample you in dust; all the power with which he injures you is your own. From indignities that the beasts themselves would not endure, you can free yourselves by simply willing it. Resolve to serve no more, and you are free. Think of the battles of Miltiades. of Leonidas and of Themistocles, which after two-thousand years are as freshly in the minds of men as though they were of yesterday. They were triumphs not so much of Greece as of liberty..... All other goods men will labour to obtain, but to liberty alone they are indifferent. Yet, we were all moulded in the same dye, all born in freedom as brother?, born too with a love of liberty which nothing but our vices has effaced."

That spirit of revolt was not compatible with Christianity, Catholic or Protestant; indeed, with any religion. It proclaimed that man was the master of his destiny. There was no supernatural power presiding over his fate. Recognition of the right of resistance to despotic power became a condition for further human advance. Therefore, Grotius and others came to the conclusion that a Christian had to choose between liberty and faith; all hopes of liberty must be sacrificed by the faithful. The corollary to the conclusion was obvious: In quest of freedom, rrfan had left behind the age of faith; further advance towards the goal was condi-

tional upon rejection of the religious mode of thought in favour of reason and scientific knowledge.

By that time, science had come of age; speculative thought could be replaced by a philosophy based on positive knowledge. Descartes was the architect of the edifice of the new philosophy. He developed the method of "Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences." This full title of his famous treatise on *Method* clearly indicates the nature of the new philosophy founded by Descartes. At last a mathematically sound hypothesis of a mechanistic cosmology was set up. The inductive method of reasoning—from experience, from the particulars—was Francis Bacon's contribution to the new philosophy. He *also* declared that the object of philosophy was to enable man to acquire mastery over the forces of nature by means of scientific discoveries. He was the first to use the now familiar expression "knowledge is power." Respectfully bowing Aristotle out of the place of honour conceded to him by orthodox tradition, Bacon held up Democritos, the father of Materialism, as the greatest of ancient philosophers. Modern thought, was to take up the threads of ancient Materialism, relegating the long enough religious interlude to the museum of history.

The philosophy of Hobbes was purely secular. He had no use even for metaphysical rationalism. He was an out -and-out Materialist. Natural Law, for him, was not an abstract philosophical concept. The founders of human society were not philosophers full of wisdom; they were beast-like bipeds with no culture, moved only by the instinct of self-preservation; that urge eventually welded them together, and thus laid the foundation of society. That was not man's fall from Grace; that was how Natural Law began moulding human life and to dominate the development of society—from- savagery to civilisation.

Brushing aside the whole period of history during which

all thinking was more or less mixed up with religion and theology, Hobbes went all the way back to the Epicurean tradition, to discover the stable basis for a really secular philosophy. While an exile in Paris, he met Gassendi who had revived the latest and the most positive achievement of the ancient Greek civilisation. While Christian theology appropriated the philosophy of Aristotle, Epicures was practically forgotten. Gassendi was a physicist, and was fully equipped with a knowledge of all the systems of naturalist philosophy which had been developed in ancient Greece. Therefore, he could "embrace with a sure glance exactly what was best suited to modern times and to the empirical tendency of his age."[26]

Gassendi not only rescued ancient atomism, but showed that, though a pagan (so also was Aristotle), Epicuros was the purest moralist of all ancient philosophers. To revive the Epicurean tradition was an extremely difficult task. Practically all the works of Epicuros were destsroyed, and lie had for centuries been the object of gross misrepresentation and shameless calumny. His entire philosophy had to be reconstructed from one reliable source—the famous poem *De Rerum Naturae* by Lucretius, written in the last century before Christ. Gassendi introduced Lucretius to the scholars of his time. Born during the period of the civil war in Rome, when everything was in the most unstable and chaotic condition, the poet sought for some meaning of life and found it only in the philosophy of Epicuros. The essence of the Epicurean philosophy is set forth in the very beginning of the poem.

"When human life to view lay foully prostrate upon earth, crushed down under the weight of religion, who showed her head from the quarters of heaven with hideous aspect lowering upon mortals, a man of Greece ventured first to lift up his mortal eyes to her face, and first with-

[26] A. Lange, *History of Materialism.*

stand her to her face. Him neither story of gods, nor thunderbolts, nor heaven with threatening roar, could quell, but only stirred up the more—the eager courage of his soul, filling him with desire to be the first to burst the fast bars of Nature's portals."[27]

Beginning as the naturalism of the early physicists, Greek philosophy, having gone through several stages of metaphysical development, culminated in the Materialism of Epicures, who held that deliverance from the degrading influence of religion was the aim of philosophy. Therefore, when in quest of freedom man ultimately revolted against God, he found inspiration only in the liberating tradition of the Epicurean philosophy, which had improved upon ancient naturalism by showing that the law-governed Universe made room for individual freedom, and by incorporating in it a system of ethics which required no metaphysical sanction. Lucretius describes the Epicurean view of the evolution of man from his primitive state:

"Hardened against frost and heat, they lived, like the animals, without any agricultural arts. The fruitful soil offered them spontaneously streams and springs. They dwelt in forests and caves without morality or law. The use of fire and even a clothing of skins were unknown. In their contests with the wild animals, they generally conquered, and were pursued by few only. Gradually, they learned to build huts, to prepare the soil for crops and the use of fire; the ties of family life were formed and men began to grow more gentle. Friendship grew up between neighbours, mercy to women and children was introduced, and though ^perfect harmony might not yet reign, yet, for the most part, men lived in peace with one another."

Here is undoubtedly the picture of the origin of human society, which became the foundation of the political philosophy of Hobbes. Philosophically an avowed Materialist,

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[27] Lucretius, *De Rerum Naturae* (Monro's translation).

Hobbes reaches his idea of the origin of the State with the following remarkable arguments:

"Nature, the art whereby God hath made and governs the world, is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also, imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within; why may we not say that all automata have an artificial life? What is the heart but a spring, and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth or State, in Latin, *civiias,* which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body."[28]

The description of the natural "state of man led to a contradiction. Nature has made men equal in faculties of the body and mind." From this equality of ability ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. If two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and, in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy and subdue one another. "These pessimistic conclusions are wrongly, drawn from a realistic analysis of the equality of men in the state of nature. It is done to explain the necessity of laws, and political organisation of society. Hobbes finds the solution of an artificially created problem in the operation of the Natural Law." The passions that incline men to peace are fear and death, desire of such things as are necessary to

[28] Hobbes, *Leviathan.*

commodious living, and a hope, by their industry, to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles are they which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature."

Then Hobbes proceeds to explain terms: Natural right means the liberty of each man to use his own power for the preservation of his life. Liberty is the absence of external impediments which often deprive man of the power to do what he would. And "a law of nature is a precept or general rule found out by reason by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life." But the otherwise logically consistent philosophy of Hobbes remained vitiated by a fallacy. It was the inability to reconcile freedom of will with the mechanistic view of life. Once it is shown, as Hobbes did following Epicures, that society was the creation of man, that man was not created by God to fulfil any divine design, man's creativeness logically follows; and creativeness presupposes will. But scientific knowledge was not yet advanced enough. Astronomy and physics had established a plausible hypothesis of mechanistic cosmology, which could embrace man as an "automaton". But the science of man was still to rise to explain the structure and the function of the highest organism. The potentialities of man as the embodiment of a sovereign power were not understood until biology developed to the extent of annexing psychology to its domain. Only then was the relation between will and reason revealed, and a flawless materialist phiolsophy became possible.

In the seventeenth century, when the ideological foundation of the modern civilisation and culture were laid, a harmony of Humanism and a materialist cosmology (naturalism) could be found in the Epicurean tradition. By freeing atomism of its original naivety, Epicuros made room for individual freedom in a law-governed Universe, in a

world obeying the laws of nature. The Epicurean view as described by Lucretius was an anticipation of the doctrine of natural selection in the physical world.

"For verily not by design did the first beginnings of things station themselves each in its right place, guided by keen-sighted intelligence, nor did they bargain, sooth to say, what motions each should assume, but because many in number, and shifting about in many ways throughout the Universe, they are driven and tormented by blows during infinite time past; after trying motions and unions of every kind, at length they fall into arrangements such as those out of which this our sum of things has formed, and by which too it is preserved through many great years, when once it has been thrown into the appropriate motions, and causes the streams to replenish the greedy sea with copious river waters, and the earth, fostered by the heat of the sun, to renew its produce, and the race of living things to come up and flourish, and the gliding fires of either to live."[29]

On the threshold of the modern times, man was again confronted with the same problems as of old—the problems of his own being and becoming in the context of his surroundings, physical as well as social. Without understanding the natural phenomena which provided the background of his physical being, he could not harness them for his benefit and thus succeed in the struggle for existence. How to acquire the knowledge of nature so as to have the power to master it? The society and State, created by man for carrying on the struggle for existence more successfully, should not deprive him of his natural freedom. How should social and political relations be regulated so that they might serve the purpose of helping man attain greater and greater freedom instead of making an automaton out of him?

The intellectual life of the classical antiquity culmi-

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[29] Lucretius, *Ibid.*

nated in the Epicurean revolt against natural religion. The subsequent revolt of man known as the Renaissance drew inspiration from that spiritual tradition. Then began a new stage of intellectual development, a new adventure of ideas. Ultimately, institutionalised Christianity, Catholic as well as Protestant, was eclipsed by the revival of naturalism, reinforced by the newly acquired scientific knowledge. The incentive for that new achievement of human creativeness was provided by the idea of the Natural Law, which replaced the religious belief in a creator or the mystic notion of a teleological order ordained by a divine Providence. The laws of the order of nature could be discovered and understood. They need no longer be ascribed to any supernatural agency beyond the control of man; and society, being also a creation of man, could be so administered as to serve the purpose of man, the purpose being attainment of freedom.

CHAPTER VII

BIRTH OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

EVER since the intellectual Renaissance of the twelfth century, theology had been steadily undermined by scholastic rationalism. But its imposing structure did not begin to crumble until the rise of a mechanistic cosmology. Metaphysical rationalism had been completely absorbed in the science of God by the genius of Albertus Magnus and his greater disciple Thomas Aquinas. In the early thirteenth century, the University of Paris was the breeding ground of free thought, which threatened to pass beyond the limits of theology. Peter Abelard, the earliest harbinger of the Renaissance, had presumed to explain the mystery of the Trinity, and dared to submit all things in heaven and earth to the test of human reason. Subsequently, scholastic rationalism moved farther away from theology and tended towards philosophy under the impact of "new Aristotle" introduced in Western Europe by the secular Arab thinkers. Averroes' interpretation of "the philosopher", which dominated the schools of the West for two centuries, emphasised and developed the most anti-Christian elements in his teachings, such as the eternity of matter, the unity of active intellect and the negation of individual immortality. The traditional study of *Logic* was superceded by that of *Physics, De Anima* and parts of *Metaphysic.* Natural philosophy penetrated the strongholds of super-naturalism, and challenged the supremacy of theology.

Orthodox schoolmen unsuccessfully struggled against the Arabian Aristotle until Albertus Magnus smuggled in "Averroeist heresy" on the authority of Aristotle dressed in Christian garb. European intellect had been so very deeply influenced by the Arab rationalist thought that even

Thomas Aquinas was compelled to differentiate philosophy from theology, thus vindicating the earlier heretic, Abelard. Finally, on the authority of the two greatest Christian scholars and thinkers of the Middle-Age, scholastic rationalism received the stamp of orthodoxy. A clear line was drawn between natural and revealed religion, between truth which could be established by human reason and the transcendental truth which was to be revealed only by the grace of God. Significantly enough, even that region of super-naturalism was thrown open to reason, to the extent of examining the self-consistency of authority. That was a veritable revolution in the realm of human thought.

"Hitherto philosophy had been either an avowed foe or a dangerous and suspected ally. By the genius of the great Dominicans (Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas), all that was (potentially) Christian or not un-Christian in Aristotle was woven into the very substance and texture of what was henceforth more and more to grow into the accredited theology of the Catholic Church. The content of the whole philosophy of the pagan philosopher, including even his great treatise on ethics, are embodied in the *Summa Theologiae*. The grand conviction that religion is rational and that reason is divine, that all knowledge and all truth, from whatever source derived, must be capable of harmonious adjustment—of that conviction the *Summa* remains a magnificent monument, still, on some points, not wholly useless as a help to the rationalisation of Christian belief."[1]

Modern philosophy thus was not born on a particular date, or even in a clearly demarcated short period, as the

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[1] Dean Hastings Rashdall. *The Universities of Mediaeval Europe* Vol. 1. pp. 368-9.

As for example, the neo-Thomism of our time. "Philosophy is the highest of human sciences, that is, of the sciences which know things by the natural licht of reasons. But there is a science above it; it is theology. The word theology means the science of God." (Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy)*

ideology of a rising class. Its growth, indeed, was a dialectic process; but it was a process of dynamics, not of mechanics—of internal motion, not of any external impact. It was a continuous process of intellectual unfoldment; there were interruptions, but no break. Rationalism as well as naturalism, born of the adolescence of human spirit, did not die out even in the dark age of Christian bigotry; thereafter, matured in the Schools of mediaeval learning, under the terrifying tutelage of theology, they blossomed forth, one in the springtide of the intellectual Renaissance of the twelfth century, and the other in the great humanist resurgence. Ultimately, the two apparently divergent currents of man's spiritual energy merged into the modern philosophy.

Throughout the Middle-Ages, the study of cosmology, astronomy, physics and mathematics was pursued by obscure scholars.[2] The intellectual life of that time was not "an age-long weary orgy of barren chatter interrupted by the orderly arguments of a few men of genius who are as isolated as they are great, but a process of incessant wisdom and folly with distinguishable lines of development in it, a process which did not come to a sudden close on the appearance of Erasmus and Luther, nor linger fruitlessly in obsolete schools, but threw up ideas and ways of thought and speech which have profoundly influenced science and philosophy of the modern world. The change which began to pass over the schools of France in the eleventh century, and culminated in the great intellectual Renaissance of the following age, was but an effort of that general revivification of the human spirit which should be recognised as constituting an epoch in the history of European civilisation not less momentous than the Reformation or the French Revolution."[3]

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[2] See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science;*

Charles H. Hoskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science;* and William C. D. Dampier, *A History of Science.*

[3] Rashdall, *The Universities of Mediaeval Europe.*

On the other hand, having grown out of that background of a continuous intellectual unfoldment, under so very different conditions, modern philosophy naturally carried the ballast of mediaeval tradition in the metaphysical rationalism of its founder. At the same time, the success of Descartes' mission of liberating philosophy from the tutelage of theology[4] was possible only thanks to the epoch-making discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo. With the appearance of those pioneers of scientific (mechanistic) naturalism, the Renaissance assumed an independent character. The fifteenth century was a period of transition. The great Humanists of that period heralded the coming, of a new era on the authority of ancient traditions. With the rise of modern science, the Renaissance outgrew its revivalist character. The new era was to be really new, inspired by a new philosophy which combined rationalist tradition with naturalism reinvigorated by modern science; "The sixteenth century marks its place in history as the century of revolutions; it not only broke the chain which bound Europe to Rome; it also broke the chain which bound philosophy to scholasticism. It set human reason free; it proclaimed the liberty of thought and action."[5]

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The doctrine of Natural Law liberated human spirit from the fetters of the venerable dogmas of religion and the awe-inspiring authority of theology. The law-governed Universe of Christian teleology was ruled by super-natural laws given by God who had originally created a cosmos out of chaos. At the close of the Middle-Ages Nature replaced God; but at the same time the Natural Law deprived man of the limited degree of freedom conceded to him by

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[4] "In the seventeenth century, the Cartesian reform resulted in the severence of philosophy from theology, the refusal to recognise the rightful control of theology and its function as a negative rule in respect of philosophy." (Maritain, *Introduction to Philosophy).*

[5] Lewes, *History of Philosophy.*

religion. Man's soul, after all, was a spark of the divine light. Christianity granted a free will to man, though it was freedom only to commit sin so that his soul could be redeemed by Grace. Modern philosophy, as it crystallised with Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes, was confronted with the problem of reconciling, on the one hand, a rationalist metaphysics with a mechanistic cosmology, human reason with physical nature and, on the other hand, the idea of freedom with the concept of necessity. The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance appeared to be in conflict with the mechanistic naturalism of science, and the latter with the sovereignty of human reason and freedom of human will, although all of them united in challenging the tyranny of theology. To put it differently, the problem was to harmonise human reason, including will, with physical determinism. All the traditional concepts, the old patterns of thought, were thus in the melting pot.

The Cartesian method of doubting everything was certainly the only way out of the apparent confusion. In that sense, Descartes may be called the founder of modern philosophy, although, in the last analysis, the spirit of the new «ra was represented more truly by Bacon's empiricism (inductive logic) and Hobbes' determinism than by Descartes' rationalist metaphysics. However, the genius of all the three taken together raised philosophy to the independent status of a system of human knowledge, of nature and man's relation with it. Breaking away from super-naturalism, modern philosophy set human spirit free; an exhilarating perspective of newer and greater adventures of ideas was opened up before the daring vision of the spiritually free man.[6]

[6] In the modest disguise of the faithful, Bacon went to the extent of suggesting that venerable superstitions should be subjected to the test of human reason. "I have always thought that the two questions of the" existence of God and the nature of the soul were the chief of those (questions) which ought to be demonstrated rather by philosophy than by

The fundamental problem which faced modern philosophy at its birth, the problem of the relation between thought and being, is as old as philosophy itself. Even before the resurgence of humanist naturalism, the old question of philosophy was revived by the schoolmen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who tried to reconcile theology with rationalism. In course of time, the selfsame problem was differently formulated; it was posed as the question of the relation of human thought about the world with the world itself: Can the human mind really know the world? Do man's notions and perceptions contain a picture of the reality? Ancient naturalism had been concerned chiefly with the reality of the Universe. Descartes combined the study of the physical Universe with an analysis of the human mind; modern philosophy thus was to be reared upon the twin-pillars of physics and psychology.

"The question regarding the relation of thought to being, of the spirit to the nature, the highest question of philosophy, has its roots, no less than religion, in the ignorant notions of man in the state of barbarism. But this question can be put in the sharpest form, and in all its significance, only after the European people has emerged from the long winter slumber of the Christian Middles-Ages."[8] That would be a very correct appreciation of the genesis of the dualist fallacy, and a sound observation about the birth of modern philosophy, if the last phrase was re-writeen as follows: after the resurrection of science or the rise of modern science.

As a matter of fact, the modern philosophy of the Cartesian school suffered from the dualist fallacy, because the science of life and mind still lagged behind, while

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theology, for, although it is sufficient for us, the faithful, to believe in God, and that the soul does not perish with the body, it certainly does not seem possible ever to persuade the infidel unless we first prove to them, these two things by natural reason."

[8] Frederick Engels, *Feuerbach.*

mathematics, physics and astronomy forged ahead. The problem of dualism, which baffled philosophy in the seventeenth century, resulted from the uneven development of science. In the last analysis, it was the old dichotomy of matter and mind, which was finally resolved in Spinoza's unitary system, but still on the basis of metaphysical rationalism.

Reason was not humanised; it was not placed in the context of physical nature accessible to human understanding until modern philosophy was reinforced by psychological doctrines deduced from the physiological and generally biological enquiries of Hartley, Erasmus Darwin, de Tracy and Cabanis. Then, the anomaly which had faced human intellect just when modern philosophy liberated it from the authority of super-naturalism and tyranny of theology—the anomaly of Nature replacing God, but Natural Law depriving man of all freedom—disappeared like mist on the rising of the sun. The mathematical rigour of Spinoza's rationalism (deductive method) placed man, with his mind, *theoretically* in the unitary scheme of nature. In his monistic system, the apparent contradiction between Natural Law and human will disappeared; because both could be referred back to a common origin, reduced to a common denominator.

Before long, the rationally conceived theory of man's relation to nature was empirically verified by psychological enquiries and physiological researches. Man being an integral part of nature, his will to freedom is a natural urge —a manifestation of the Natural Law. There is no contradiction between reason and will; on the other hand, a rationalist metaphysics and a mechanistic cosmology can be harmonised in a monistic philosophical system. Human reason is a continuation of the reason in nature—the Natural Law, which is not a transcendental metaphysical concept, but an abstraction from the experience that physical pro-

cesses are determined. The corollary is a reconciliation of the concept of necessity and urge for freedom, the latter being a specific expression of the Natural Law in the animate world. Ultimately, absolved of the original sin of ignorance, and freed from the mediaeval ballast of superstition, the native rationality of human nature realised itself in romanticism—the belief in man's unlimited creativeness, man's belief in himself.

The Cartesian system, notwithstanding all its defects, particularly its dualist fallacy, orientated human spirit to that direction of the liberty of thought and action.[9] Therefore, Descartes has gone down in history as the founder of modern philosophy, which ushered in the new era heralded by the naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance. "Rene' Descartes is usually considered the founder of modern philo-isophy, and, I think, rightly. He is the first man of high philosophic capacity whose outlook is profoundly affected by the new physics and astronomy. While it is true that he retains much of scholasticism, he does not accept foundations laid by predecessors, but endeavours to construct the complete philosophic edifice *de novo.* This had not happened since Aristotle, and is a sign of the new self-confidence that resulted from the progress of science. There is a freshness about his work that is not to be found in any eminent previous philosopher since Plato."[10]

Descartes has been described as "a partaker of the modern spirit" in the full sense of the term, because he was a product of the Reformation as well as of the Renaissance, having combined the conflicting tendencies represented by such diverse personalities as Erasmus, Bacon and Luther.[11]

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[9] "It was reserved for the first half of the seventeenth century to reap in the sphere of philosophy the ripe fruits of the great emancipation which the Renaissance had secured in turn for the most various departments of man's intellectual life." (A. Lange, *History of Materialism).*

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[10] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

[11] See *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 13th Edition.

That view of Descartes' historical heritage and cultural background is based on the still prevailing error as regards the respective movements of thought. Erasmus and Luther did not leave a joint legacy for Descartes to inherit; nor could he be true to the tradition of one as well as of the other, and yet be the founder of modern philosophy entirely independent of theology.[12]

Descartes was the embodiment *par excellence* of the modern spirit, because not only did he completely break with the wrong notions of the past,[13] but his genius penetrated deeper into the future than he himself realised or his conventional interpreters have done even to-day.

Descartes conceived philosophy as the universal science, and, in his opinion, physics was the foundation of all sciences. The Cartesian philosophy co-ordinated physics with mathematics, and applied physics to physiology. Thus, it was a promising approach to the fundamental problem of the relation of man to nature, and also to the more difficult problem of man knowing himself. Descartes' scientific thinking, as distinct from his rationalist metaphysical speculations which could not quite outgrow an atavistic tendency, contained the bold suggestion that man is an integral part of the physical nature, and only as such can he have the

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[12] "In the seventeenth century, the Cartesian reform resulted in the severence of philosophy from theology, the refusal to recognise the rightful control of theology and its function as a negative rule in respect of philosophy. This was tantamount to denying that theology is a science, or anything more than a mere practical discipline, and to claiming that philosophy, or human wisdom, is the absolutely sovereign science which admits no other superior to itself. Thus, in spite of the religious beliefs of Descartes himself, Cartesianism introduced the principle of rationalist philosophy which denies God the right to make known by revelation truths which excede the natural scope of reason." (Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy).*

[13] "Several years have now elapsed since I first became aware that I had accepted even from my youth many false opinions for true, and that consequently what I afterwards based on such principles, was highly doubtful. And from that time, I was convinced of the necessity of understanding once in my life to rid myself of all the opinions I had adopted, and of commencing anew the work of building from the foundation." *(Meditations).*

knowledge of the truth of his being and becoming. If the laws of physics, that is to say, of the inanimate world, were applicable to the internal functions of biological organisms, then there could be no hiatus between the living and the non-living. The Cartesian psycho-physical parallelism resulted from the arbitrary postulate of a "rational soul" superimposed on the fully mechanistic biological organism of man. To that extent, the ghost of scholasticism was still haunting the founder of modern philosophy. Nevertheless, in the Cartesian philosophy, soul is even less immaterial than in Aristotle's naturalism. The adjective *rational* is of supreme importance. Yet, precisely that would be the source of ambiguity, so long as the concept of reason remained veiled in mystery. But on that point also, Descartes' ideas contained the light to penetrate the veil.

In the Cartesian system, the abstract concept of the Natural Law is concretised as the coherence and expression of the invariant relations of the physical world; and, on the other hand, the metaphysical concept of rationality also received a human content. By coordinating a rationalist metaphysics with a physically deterministic naturalism, Descartes prepared the ground for the rise of a really new-philosophy. It was like a mutation in the evolution o£ thought. It changed the outlook of man fundamentally: the world is a cosmos, but not a teleological order serving an inscrutable divine purpose; on the other hand, man is a rational being possessed of the capacity to acquire knowledge of the mechanism of nature, of his relation with it, and, thanks to that ever growing knowledge, gain power[14] to mould the world according to his will and consequently hold his destiny in his own hand. That is the romantic view of life, which places man, himself a process of becoming, imbedded in the self-contained and self-governed scheme of

[14] The co-founder of modern philosophy, Francis Bacon, for the first time used the phrase "knowledge is power."

Nature, in the centre of the world, to create new worlds, social as well as conceptual, out of the available material provided by Nature. It is romanticism, not mystic and dreamy, but naturalist in the scientific sense.

In order to formulate a philosophy as the universal science, Descartes had to revolutionise the conception of science prevailing in his time. Science was as yet too undeveloped to be so universalised as to be identical with philosophy; nor could it even build up an abstract theoretical system mathematically deduced from empirical propositions. The pioneering efforts to acquire knowledge of the various aspects of nature had to be made empirically, by the humdrum method of observation and experiment, by the patience of modest men. Descartes' impetuosity, therefore, was premature; it preferred mathematical reasoning to empiricism[15] which was essential for laying down a solid and reliable foundation of objective knowledge for a scientific theoretical structure of profound philosophical significance. Nevertheless, Descartes' impetuousity placed before man's intellect an inspiring vision. He compared science to a tree; metaphysics is the root; physics, the trunk; and mechanics, medicine and morals are the three main branches, being the respective application of man's knowledge to nature, the human body and human behaviour.

The *Principles of Philosophy,* which contains Descartes' scientific ideas, was the last to be published of his three main works. But it was the first to be written, substantially, and an outline of it was published in 1637 (before the publication of *Discourse* and *Meditations*) with the object of making "some general observations which, under an appearance of simplicity, might sow the good seed of more adequate ideas

[15] Descartes did not altogether neglect the method of observation and experiment. He worked hard on refraction and carried on anatomical research to prove that imagination and memory were physical processes. Proudly he used to show to his visitors dissected animal heads and called them more important than books.

on the world and man". The book was anonymously published under the title *Philosophical Essays.* But it carried a sub-title describing its contents: "Project of a Universal Science capable of raising our nature to its highest perfection, wherein the most curious matters which the author select as a proof of the universal science, which he proposes, are explained in such a way that even the unlearned may understand them."

The desire to democratise science and philosophy was inherent in the spirit of modernism, which ushered in the era of democracy.[16] But during the following centuries of phenomenal expansion of scientific knowledge and the consequent enrichment of philosophy, Descartes' admirable democratic desire was forgotten. Empirical research and elaboration of theories necessarily led to extreme specialisation, excluding general participation in scientific knowledge. To philosophise also became the privilege of an e'lite. To an extent, that line of intellectual progress, contradictory to the democratic desire of Descartes, could not be avoided. Nevertheless, had all the scientists and philosophers of the centuries of enlightenment and great scientific achievements felt it keenly enough, Descartes' ambition to democratise intellectual life could be realised. The widest possible dissemination of scientific knowledge and philosophical thought might have made a reality of democracy. Fulfilment of the desire of Descartes still remains a fundamental necessity of an all-round social development. Except on the basis of a democratisation of knowledge and rational thought, democracy is not possible.

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[16] "Descartes, in addition to the vast intrinsic value of his works, had the immense merit of doing more than any previous writer to divorce philosophy from erudition, and to make it an appeal to the reasoning power of ordinary men..... Descartes more than any one else was the author of what may be called the democratic character of philosophy, and 'this is not the least of his merits." (W. E. R. Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe).*

Descartes' method answers the question: How is intelligence, as distinct from erudition, possible? He was constantly trying to fight down his scholastic atavism. "There is no question more important to solve than that of knowing what human knowledge is and how far it extends. The first thing to know is intellect, because on it depends knowledge of all other things."[17] Imagination and memory are the other two or three sources of knowledge. Descartes often identified sense perceptions (sensual data) with memory. But the knowledge acquired only from these sources is obscure, fragmentary and incoherent; therefore, they are likely to lead astray unless the data provided by them were subjected to the judgment of intellect, which alone is capable of discriminating between truth and error. Cartesian intellect is evidently identical with rationality.

Descartes' extreme scepticism was very useful in liberating human intelligence from the paralysing bondage of tradition and authority. But the fallacious dictum: *Cogito, ergo sum* made for subjective Idealism, which clouded man's vision, opened up at the birth of the modern philosophy, and prepared a psychological atmosphere congenial for the religious revivalism of Berkeley, which confused philosophy for a long time to come. The confusion still persists, to be cleared so that the grand vision of man's freedom and human creativeness may be restored to dissipate the mist heavily hanging over the present, and to penetrate the darkness of the future.

The motto—*Cogito, ergo sum*—at the same time could be interpreted as a humanist dictum. Attaching the supreme importance to human reason and human judgment, it placed man at the centre of the world. Man's being was made dependent on himself. The corollary was his power to mould and control his becoming. Man became the master

[17] *Discourse.*

of his destiny. Cartesian rationalism was developed by the more illustrious of his immediate followers (Spinoza and the French Encyclopedists) and later on by a whole succession of philosophers.

Descartes' analytical geometry and the theory of vortices established the mechanistic cosmology. It was a hypothesis freed from the fallacy of action at a distance, which had been solved in ancient atomism in a childishly arbitrary manner. While the philosophical implications of the hypotheses of Cartesian physics were very far-reaching, in the field of scientific enquiry they were equally pregnant with great possibilities. They anticipated, perhaps Descartes himself not realising it, the basic concepts of twentieth century physics, namely, multi-dimensional space and all-pervasive substance. Descartes conceived weight and velocity as dimensions of matter, like length, breadth and depth. "By dimensions I understand not precisely the mode and aspect according to which a subject is considered to be measurable. Thus, it is not merely the case that length, breadth and depth are dimensions, but weight also is a dimension in terms of which the heaviness of an object is estimated. So too velocity is a dimension of motion, and there are infinite numbers of similar instances."[18]

Cartesian analytical geometry tended towards the concept of non-Euclidean space, and clearly realised the relativity of motion. Descartes rejected "the vulgar conception of motion as the action by which anybody passes from one place to another", and defined motion as "the transference of one part of matter or one body from the vicinity of those bodies that are in immediate contact with it, and which we regard as in repose, into the vicinity of others."[19]

This definition of motion anticipates in an embryonic form Einstein's Physical Principle of Relativity. Descartes

[18] *Principles of Philosophy*. .

[19] Ibid.

went even further and rejected the notion that fixed location is a categorical imperative of physics. Only in relation to a system of arbitrarily chosen co-ordinates can any point be called fixed. Together with motion, place was also a relative concept. Read time and space instead of motion and place, to realise how far Descartes' geometrical and physical ideas approximated those of our time. He declared: "I deny the movement of the earth more carefully than Copernicus and more truthfully than Ticho."[20] If he really disagreed with the pioneers of modern physics and astronomy, that was because he agreed with Einstein, in anticipation. Perhaps the enigmatic statement was dictated by caution—to escape the long arm of militant sacerdotal authority. But it contained a very large grain of truth, which was not discovered until the beginning of the twentieth century: that no body is ever at rest, except in relation to other moving bodies. In relation to the sun, the earth is moving; but with reference to a system of coordinates in the space surrounding it, the earth can be regarded as stationary.

Descartes' "first matter" is all-pervasive, like the later concept of ether. This bold hypothesis enabled him to do away with metaphysical devices for making things happen, such as Galileo's "force" or "attraction", and Kepler's "active power". And the hypothesis was borne out by the empirical concept of the relativity of motion.

For the insoluble fallacy of action at a distance, Descartes rejects atomism, and conceives space as absolutely full. The traditional concept of space as an ultimate category quietly disappears, and physical space, the space of analytical geometry, becomes coincident with the all-pervasive "first matter", as a measurable function of the latter. Descartes rejects the notion of void space with the argument that the essence of substance being extension, wherever there is exten-

[20] *Principles.*

sion, there is substance. The problem of action at a distance is solved by one stroke of ingenuity and bold thinking.

The substance which fills the space is composed of angular particles. The mass of matter is in motion. The angular particles are ground into spherical shapes. The particles rubbed off in the process constitute a more subtle kind of matter. The first kind goes into the constitution of luminous bodies like the sun and stars. There is still a third kind of coarser matter, less fitted for motion; it constitutes the opaque bodies—earths and planets. The second category of matter is the transparent substance of the sky. The motion of matter takes the form of revolving circular currents. Thus originate the famous vortices of Descartes. The coarser matter collects at the centre of a vortex, while the finer kinds surround it. The emission of light is their centrifugal motion; and the planets are carried round the suns by the motion of the vortices.

That is Descartes' theory of vortices which, in his mechanistic cosmology, supplants atomism. Full of naive and *ad hoc* suppositions, the theory nevertheless contains significant pointers of far-reaching implications. For instance, the formation of vortices, and their marking the stage at which the amorphous mass of the primordial stuff is differentiated, bears a striking resemblance to the "wave-packets" of the New Quantum Theory—electrons appearing out of the background of the field of vibratory motion, as groups of concentric waves. Then the all-pervasive substance being self-moving, indeed it being virtually identical with motion, the necessity of postulating an impulse coming from outside, or a prime mover, is eliminated. The conception of an all-pervading substance is free from the obvious fallacies of atomism, one of them being incompatibility with the idea of infinity, and any compromise of that idea makes room for the unknown and unknowable; consequently, mysticism creeps back into cosmology; natural philosophy becomes

mystic and metaphysical, if not out and out religious. A self-moving, all-pervasive substance, on the contrary, can be infinitely extended, because it does not require any beyond or outside as the source of the original impulse or the seat of the prime mover.

Therefore, Descartes' mentioning God as the final cause of all movement is entirely gratuitous. While Newton's *deus ex machina* was superfluous, Descartes' God was inadmissible by the logic of his physical theory. He "expressly explained the movement of the particles as well as those of bodies out of mere conduction, according to the law of mechanical impact. He named, indeed, the universal cause of all movements, God; but all bodies, according to him, are subject to a particular motion, and every natural phenomenon consists without distinction of the organic or inorganic, merely of the conduction of motion of one body to another; and then all mystical explanations of nature were set aside at once."[21]

Though fully convinced that his cosmological hypothesis would be pragmatically confirmed, distrust for empiricism nevertheless induced Descartes to attach greater importance to the rational solution of metaphysical problems. There again, his scholastic atavism made itself felt. Eager to combat scholasticism successfully, he presumably believed that the most effective method would be to meet the foe on his ground and fight him with his weapons, pay him in his own coin, so to say. But it was not altogether a practical consideration which influenced Descartes' thinking. Primarily a rationalist, he believed that the foundation of his new philosophy must be a sound metaphysics. His attempt revealed the fallacy of metaphysical rationalism. He did start with the intention of founding a materialist metaphysics. Even after laying special emphasis on the priority of mind, he merged it into the body.[22] The mind "has

[21] A Lange, *History of Materialism.*

[22] "It was of the utmost importance for the whole subsequent develop-

no relation to extension nor dimension; it does not occupy any space; yet it is really joined to the whole body, and we cannot say that it exists in any one of its parts to the exclusion of others. It radiates forth through all the remainder of the body by means of animal spirits, nerves and even the blood."[23] As against such a clear tendency towards a materialist metaphysics, Descartes' final appeal to God was out of tune with the spirit of the time which he embodied so largely. It was generally regarded as a concession to prejudice. This weak aspect of the Cartesian system was developed, by his scholastically minded disciples, notably Malebranche, as the starting point of modern Idealism.

The fact that he withheld the publication of the work setting forth his scientific views creates the impression that Descartes did desire to avoid martyrdom, and that desire induced him to introduce superfluities and irrelevancies in his metaphysics, which destroyed the coherence and harmony of his entire system. Having started as a scientist, he completed the work of his predecessors, and logically established a mechanistic cosmology, which was the *sine qua -non* for dealing the *coup de grace* to decrepit theology. His first important book, *the World,* contained his scientific views. But he withheld its publication when the news of Galileo's tragic fate reached him. This important fact is recorded in his letter to Mersenne, who was to have arranged for the publication of the book in Paris. Portions of that first work were posthumously published. But its full implications and significance were brought out by De la Mettrie in his notorious book, *Man—A Machine.* A Cartesian of the materialist school, De La Mettrie freely acknowledged his indebtedness to the master, and made the cynical remark "that the wily

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ment of science and philosophy that the place thus reluctantly admitted to mind was pitifully meagre." (E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical foundations of Modern Science).*

[23] *Principles.*

philosopher, purely for the sake of the parsons, has patched on to his theory a soul which is in reality superfluous."

One may not share De la Mettrie's cynicism; but the fact is that even the *Principles of Philosophy,* published after Descartes had won the reputation of a rationalist metaphysi-.cian, was prefaced with a cautious declaration. The world was created by God in all its perfections. "But yet, as it is test, if we wish to understand the nature of plants or of men, to consider how they may by degrees proceed from seeds, rather than how they were created by God in the beginning of the world, so, if we can excogitate some extremely simple and comprehensible principles, out of which, as if they were seeds, we can prove that stars and the earth and all this visible scene could have originated, although we know fully well that they never did originate in such a way, we shall in that way expound their nature far better than if we merely described them as they exist at present." The caution with which the enigmatic declaration begins is thrown to the winds before it is concluded. Firstly, science is not concerned with the vain and sterile search for a transcendental teleological final cause; secondly, at the same time, it is not enough for science only to describe phenomena; it must trace their cause in nature; and thirdly, science must have a metaphysical foundation so as to be universal and to support a philosophy conceived as the universal science.

Descartes' cautious statement in the preface of the *Principles* was further counter-acted by a categorical declaration in the text of the book itself: "It is impossible for us to know God's purpose." And on another occasion he remarked: "Give me matter and motion, and I will construct the Universe." In his cosmology, matter and motion are given. What God could do with them, can be done also by a man.

What is the use of having such a God, no more powerful

than the mortal man? When the utterly unnecessary introduction of God, whatever might have been his reason to do so, is set aside, Descartes' metaphysics turns out to be a discovery of the rational foundation of the objective physical Universe.

Plato was the first to attempt such a metaphysics. la the meantime, the concept of reason was taken over by scholastic theology, and the rationalist metaphysics became rationalisation of theology. Reason had to be rehabilitated, humanised, so to say, before a rationalist metaphysics could be constructed without prejudicing the objective reality of the physical world. In the time of Descartes, that could not as yet be done empirically; therefore, he did it theoretically, with the aid of mathematics. During the following centuries, science made much progress in the direction of de-mystifying the concept of reason, and placing it in the context of the scheme of the physical Universe. It was discovered empirically that human reason is a continuation of reason in nature; that it represents the operation of the Natural Law on the highest level of the biological world \ that the origin of human rationality can be traced to the rational foundation of the objective physical world. This has now become such a generally admitted article of scientific faith that a front rank philosophically sceptic physicist of our time is compelled to concede that "light may perhaps be thrown upon this darkness (the epistemological confusion created by a tendencious philosophical interpretation of the twentieth century physical theories) when we consider that not only is our reason a part of nature, but that nature must also in some way be concerned with reason."[24]

While heralding a new era of the spiritual development of man, Descartes at the same time lived in a period of transition. Therefore, his philosophy jis a whole contained two distinct tendencies which often got mixed up. Yet, the

[24] J. Winternitz, *The Theory of Relativity and Epistemology.*

.-subsequent development of the two tendencies can be roughly traced in the history of philosophy of the eighteenth ,and nineteenth centuries. The naturalist humanist scientific tendency again, for a time, bifurcated in two directions: (1) The French Enlightenment, and (2) German romanticism of Herder, Goethe, Schiller etc., through Spinoza. Rousseau's romanticism, which subsequently inspired the French Revolution, also resulted from the Cartesian humanist rationalism. The metaphysical tendency of Descartes' philosophy, his dualism, having passed through various stages of a not consistent uniform development, culminated in the monistic Idealism of Hegel. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that Descartes' ideas, directly or indirectly, influenced all the currents of modern philosophical thought until the "baffling problem of psycho-physical parallelism was solved" by the logical unfolding of his original ideas.

"After all, the metaphysical theology of Descartes, however essential in his own eyes, serves chiefly as the ground for constructing his theory of man and of the Universe. His fundamental hypothesis relegates to God all forces in their ultimate origin. Hence the world is left open for the free play of mechanics and geometry. He starts with the clear and distinct idea of extension, figured and moved, and thence by mathematical laws he gives a hypothetical explanation of all things. Such explanation of physical phenomena is the main problem of Descartes, and it goes on encroaching upon the territories once supposed proper to the mind. Descartes began with the certainty that we are thinking beings; that region remains untouched; but up to its very borders, the mechanical explanation of nature reigns unchecked."[25]

Descartes' differentiation between men and animals was indeed arbitrary. Not only all animals other than man are automata; as a biological organism, man also is a machine

[25] *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 13th Edition.

as De la Mettrie deduced from Descartes' view that there is no distinction between organic and inorganic nature. "It was due to Descartes that all the functions as well of intellectual as of physical life were finally regarded as products of mechanical changes."[20] Yet, he stuck to the idea o£ soul. At the same time, he hailed Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood even when it was generally deprecated. Harvey's discovery exploded the notion of the "vital spirits", which had dominated psychology ever since the days of Aristotle and Galen. Having accepted Harvey's revolutionary theory, Descartes could still retain the idea of soul only as a make-believe. Researches in animal psychology during Descartes' life time compelled him to realise that animals are machines, yet they think.[27] Man's supposed superiority disappeared. Montaigne, who was dominating, the intellectual life of the time, clinched the issue by declaring in his characteristically paradoxical style, that animals displayed as much, and often more, reason than man. Even the qualified Cartesian concept of a "rational soul", therefore, became untenable. Animals can not only think, but are rational also. If they are biological machines, what is there in man to claim for him a higher status?

Descartes wanted to free human spirit from the sacrosanct bondage of traditional notions, and place man at the centre of the Universe. With that purpose, he endowed man with souls, which guaranteed his exalted position by anchoring it to the rational foundation of the objective Universe. When it was discovered that human reason was empirically connected with the rational scheme of nature, the imaginary anchorage was no longer necessary. Man occupies the centre

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[26] Lange, *History of Materialism.*

[27] "The sharp line Descartes tried to draw between the body and soul explains his doctrine of animals. Thought, he contended, is the essence of soul, and all that is not thought (as life and sensibility) is of the body. In denying that brutes had souls, he denied them the power of thought." (Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism).*

of the world as the highest product of the rational process of becoming.

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Another current of thought contributing to the rise of modern philosophy originated with Francis Bacon, an elder contemporary of Descartes. Both took up a critical attitude to scholastic philosophy; an all-round scepticism was their common point of departure. But there the similarity ends. In expounding their ideas, they adopted entirely different methods, which ultimately produced the self-same result—a philosophy for the modern man. Descartes' mathematical rationalism relied entirely on deducing knowledge from self-consciousness, which alone stood the test of his scepticism. Bacon, on the contrary, was the prophet of empiricism, which contributed perhaps more to the development of modern philosophy than abstract rationalism. In any case, the inductive method became the instrument of natural science, the great achievements of which bore out Bacon's contention that truth will be discovered only with the help of external experience. "Through all these ages, the smallest part of human industry has been spent upon natural philosophy, though this ought to be esteemed as the great mother of the sciences. Let none expect any great promotion of the sciences unless natural philosophy be drawn out to particular sciences; and again, unless particular sciences brought back to natural philosophy."[28]

It is clear that Bacon's empiricism did not preclude a metaphysics. But he insisted upon metaphysics being a generalisation of the positive knowledge of nature acquired empirically. He was against pure speculation. Referring to the vagueness of earlier Naturalism, he refused to accept the view that it was due to anything in nature, and pointed out that "the steadiness and regularity of natural phenomena are remarkable; and therefore are objects of certain and

[28] *Meditations.*

precise knowledge." He therefore came to the conclusion that the vagueness of knowledge, or mystic Naturalism, was due to "the perverseness and inadequacy of speculative thought. Men have sought to make a world from their own conception, and to draw from their own minds all the materials they employed; but if, instead of doing so, they had consulted experience and observation, they would have had facts and not opinion, to reason about, and might have ultimately arrived at the knowledge of the laws which govern the material world."

Descartes brought physiology under the jurisdiction of the laws of physics; but he stopped there, on the brink of an imaginary gulf beyond which he placed the mind and soul of man. On this point, his revolt against scholastic philosophy amounted to throwing out the baby with the bath water. Thomas Aquinas had taken over the essentially correct Aristotelian doctrine that life and mind are manifestations of an identical thing. In the Thomist theology, life became "the breath of God", and consequently, mind also was regarded as an immaterial spiritual category—the seat of Reason. The naturalist philosophers of the Renaissance wanted to liberate life from the tyranny of the supernatural. Theirs however was an one-sided revolt, which resulted in the dualism of Descartes. Bacon's was a total revolt. He declared: "I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain, but the mental operation which follows the acts of sense, I, for the most part, reject, and, instead of it, I open and lay out anew a certain path for the mind to proceed in, starting directly from the simple serisuous perceptions."[29]

There is a degree of extravagance of language. Actually, Bacon did not propose total rejection of mental operations. What he did, was to deny that there was a gulf between

[29] *Meditations.*

the senses and the mind. He rescued the Aristotelian doctrine of the identity of life and mind, which had been perverted in the Thomist theology, with the qualification that the former was the foundation of mind. The relation between psychology and physiology thus discovered empirically, the psyche ceases to be a transcendental mystic entity. The mind, marooned beyond the imaginary gulf which separates it from the world of life, can never be informed; "pure reason" can never yield positive knowledge. To be informed, mind must come out of the ivory tower to receive the sense perceptions as the raw material of knowledge. Bacon's empiricism and materialist metaphysics indicated the way out of the vicious circle of Cartesian dualism. Rationalism informed by empiricism, and empiricism corrected by

informed rationalism, are the components of a true philosophy.

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Thomas Hobbes, a disciple of Bacon and a critic of Descartes, made a substantial contribution to the development of modern philosophy by co-ordinating their divergent currents of thought. An uncompromising empiricist, he defined philosophy so as to identify it with natural science. While touring Europe, early in the seventeenth century, Hobbes made the important discovery that the scholastic philosophy which he had learned in Oxford was discredited in intellectual circles, replaced by scientific and critical thought. Vehemently criticising Descartes' metaphysics, which he characterised as a relapse into scholastic obscurantism, Hobbes, however, did not follow Bacon to the extent of rejecting "mental operations which follow the acts of sense." In method, he rather sided with Descartes, who, as a scientist, admitted that the real demonstrative power of any proposition lies in experience.[30] In other words, Hobbes

[30] In his earlier works, Descartes himself attached greater importance to his physical theories than to his metaphysical speculations, claiming objective validity for the former, but not for the latter.

adopted and developed the Cartesian method of enquiry as far as it was scientific. Science is not all empiricism; mental operations deprecated by Bacon play a decisive role in the process of acquiring knowledge of objective realities. The failure to grasp this inter-relation of the subject and object gave birth in the past to the dualist fallacy, and has been creating imaginary epistemological problems even in our time. Yet, that grasp is the essence of scientific method; and Descartes was the founder of the scientific method, although he himself might not have fully realised the implication of his attempt at a harmony of rationalism and empiricism. Hobbes detected that intrinsic merit of the Cartesian method and improved upon it. He demanded that philosophy must be based upon *natural reason.* Thus, he detached rationalism from its traditional metaphysical setting, and placed it in the context of the physical nature.

Though conventionally not counted among great philosophers of the rank of Descartes and Spinoza, Hobbes was the only thinker of his time to have developed in his mind a system of a universal philosophy embracing the phenomena of Body (physical nature), Man and State.[31] Apparently, metaphysics was excluded from the scheme; in reality, that was not so. Only, Hobbes as an empiricist felt very strongly against the method of starting with metaphysics; but metaphysical questions relevant to natural philosophy were treated in his system empirically. Scientific enquiry into the worlds of physics and psychology opened up an empirical approach to the problems of reason, consciousness and morality,

generally conceived as metaphysical. Hobbes was the har-

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[31] Even more than external nature, Hobbes was interested in the phenomena of social life, presenting themselves so impressively in an age of political revolution; he attempted a task which no other adherent of the new mechanistic philosophy conceived—nothing less than such a universal construction of human knowledge as would bring society and man (at once the matter and maker of society) within the same principles of scientific explanation as were found applicable to the world of nature. (See *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 13th Edition).

binger of modern psychology, which was developed by the Sensationalist Locke and his followers.[32] When it is remembered that, through Condillac, Locke greatly influenced the intellectual life of France in the eighteenth century, Hobbes' place in the history of philosophy is properly appreciated.

Although he had conceived the scheme of his all-embracing philosophy independently, Hobbes came into prominence first as a critic of Descartes' *quasi* scholastic metaphysics and absolute dualism. He rejected the doctrine of "innate ideas" with the argument which turned the table on Descartes: Any activity or change is motion; thinking is a form of activity; therefore, it is a mode of motion. Mind simply is the sum total of one's thinking activities; ergo, it is a system of motion in an animal organism. He drove the thrust home by asserting that to conceive mind as made of a substance fundamentally different from the corporeal substance was a relic of scholastic occultism. He carried the crusade against dualism further and attacked metaphysical rationalism by including reason in the mental process.

This new theory of human mind is set forth in the *Treatise on Human Nature,* wherein human rationality is traced to reason in nature. Hobbes thus humanised the concept of Natural Law which, having replaced the Providence of Christian teleology, threatened to reduce man to an automaton. While combatting the *quasi* scholastic metaphysics of Descartes, Hobbes' *Treatise on Human Nature* laid down the foundation of the mathematical metaphysics of Newton, known as the Natural Philosophy which guided the intel-

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[32] "He was not able to develop a psychology in terms of mathematical atoms, but he strayed no farther from this method than was necessary; he described the mind as a compound of the elementary parts, produced in the vital organs by the clash of inrushing and outpushing motions, and combined according to simple laws of association. Purpose and reason are admitted, but they appear not as ultimate principles of explanation, which had been their significance for the scholastic psychologists; they represent merely a certain type of phantasm or group of phantasms within the total compound. This treatment set the fashion for almost the whole modern development of psychology. Locke, the next great psychologist, followed

Jectual life of Europe during the two hundred years of great scientific achievements and material progress. In the realm of natural science, Hobbes' empiricism was more in tune with the general intellectual atmosphere of the time; he did not say actually anything more than Galileo. But his psychology provoked a fierce storm of opposition, which was further inflamed by his apparently cynical social doctrines. Truth however tells; and in the seventeenth century, the European intellect was passionately in search of truth. Therefore, before long, the very opposition to his empirical analysis of mind and reason led to a serious enquiry into the question of the natural springs and rational ground of human action. Sensationalist psychology ushered in a period of ethical speculation, which had been an abeyance since the days of Socrates and the Stoics. At the same time, the new philosophy as expounded by Bacon, Hobbes and the materialist wing of the Cartesian school tended to disown the spirit of the Renaissance. Had man revolted against God to be a slave of nature? Rousseau's romanticism replied passionately in the negative.

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Though only *quasi* materialist, sensationalism was also a reaction to metaphysical rationalism. Reason could not claim to be the source of the knowledge of absolute truth without restoring God, who was to be deposed by rationalism. That was proved by Descartes' relapse into theology. Therefore, its pretensions should be curbed. Sensationalism undertook the task. Locke argued: Know the limits of your -understanding; it is madness to attempt to go beyond those limits; on the other hand, it is folly to let in darkness and mystery within those limits, to be incessantly wondering and always assuming that matters can be so plain as they

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Hobbes' method still more explicitly and in greater detail, with the result that after him only an occasional idealist ventured to write a psychology in terms of different main assumptions.'' (Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modem Science).*

appear, and that something lying deeper courts our attention.[33] That is clear enough. The concepts ,of pure reason or metaphysical categories are rejected as mere assumptions. Locke denied the priority of idea, although he stopped short of formally endorsing the out-and-out Materialism of Hobbes. The psychological aspect of Descartes' philosophy elaborated by Hobbes and Locke returned to France to be worked up into a philosophy which inspired the great French Revolution. It was a philosophy which merged empiricism in a materialist metaphysics, reconciled the latter with rationalism detached from theology, and proclaimed the sovereignty of man gifted by nature with unlimited power. The revolt of man against God had not been in vain. The successful rebel against super-naturalism was bound to realise that he could conquer nature also. Rationalism gave birth to romanticism—the philosophy of a time when great scientific achievements changed the face of the earth, and fired man with hitherto inconceivable revolutionary ideas and ideals.

The purely rationalist (speculative) aspect of Descartes' philosophy developed in two directions: Neo-scholasticism of Malebranche, and the pantheistic ethical universalism of Spinoza. Through the latter channel, Cartesian rationalism influenced both the main branches of European philosophy-idealist as well as materialist, and also inspired the belated German Renaissance—the romanticism of Herder, Goethe, Schiller and others.[34]

The most fantastic part of Descartes' metaphysics is the doctrine of human soul—how it comes in contact with the "vital spirits", and how the interaction between soul and

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[33] *Human Understanding.*

[34] Modern philosophy founded by Bacon, Descartes and Locke, thus, was not the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie. The absurdity of this schematic historicism becomes further evident when it is remembered that through Spinoza Cartesian Idealism flowed into Hegel's philosophy of Prussianism and also fed Marxist Materialism. It is no wonder that Mars has been characterised as the "Red Prussian."

body takes place. Seated in the pineal gland, the soul can alter the direction of the motion of the vital spirits, and through them indirectly guide the movements of the body without itself being affected by them. The speculative structure of Cartesian psychology collapsed when physicists discovered that the amount of motion in any given direction was also constant, and therefore could not be changed. Cartesian dualism became obsolete; the soul could not possibly influence corporeal behaviour. It was thus a a utterly unnecessary assumption in psychology. Both Male-branche and Spinoza discarded the Cartesian fantasy, the former maintaining dualism on theological grounds of the scholastic tradition, the latter abandoning dualism to develop $_{v}$ a monistic philosophy, which could be interpreted materialistically as well as pantheistically.

Like Descartes, Spinoza also proposed to start from clearly defined and accurately known principles. His method was equally of mathematical reasoning; his whole system was cast in a geometrical form—a perfectly logical pattern, an ideal creation of pure reason. But Spinoza's first principles were not *a priori,* given in consciousness. They resulted from the reason in nature, and could be conceived by human intelligence because it was a manifestation of the universal rationality. The understanding of any phenomenon presupposes understanding of its cause; nothing appears except of necessity. The clear ideas of Spinoza are not *sui generis;* they are clear and true, because they represent objective reality. Being in harmony with reason in nature, human reason is capable of grasping the fundamental truths of existence. S'pinoza was a rationalist in the sense that his method was deductive. But in his system, reason ceases to be a metaphysical category, in the transcendental sense; it becomes an ontological entity.

The cardinal principles of Spinoza's philosophy are: (1) Unity of all that exists; (2) Regularity of all happiness;

and (3) Identity of nature and spirit. The gordian knot of dualism is cut by postulating a synthesis which Spinoza called God. But in Spinoza's philosophy, God is devoid of all the properties of the traditional God. The ambiguity of the idea of God in Spinoza's philosophy was demonstrated by some condemning him as an atheist and others seeing in him the personification of the purest religion. By the former he was expelled from the Synagogue, whereas, speaking for the German romanticists, Novalis admired him as "a god-intoxicated man". It has been remarked that the Jewish rabbis understood Spinoza's philosophy much better than his romantic admirers. Spinoza's God is identical with the rational Universe,[35] and as such the ideal of human reason. He regarded the scriptures of religion as creations of primitive human reason, to be appreciated by civilised man as poetry and not as revealed wisdom. He backed up his interpretation of the scriptures by pointing out the fact that the traditional view was confronted with the irreconcilable conflict with science. His contention was that all the centuries long attempt to establish harmony between rational knowledge and revealed wisdom was futile. Thus, the significance of Spinoza's philosophy was that it proclaimed the independence of human reason.

The synthesis is the one primal principle, extension and thought being its two eternal and infinite attributes; and together they constitute its essence. Spinoza goes a step further, because the dualist fallacy is not resolved by the synthesis; the final state of simplicity is not yet reached; the synthesis is a composite entity. Extension is the basic existence, out of which arise the duplicate manifestations—of matter and mind. Creation is not calling into existence that which had no being out of that which also has no being. Nor is it an inexplicable conjunction of two things existing

[33] Einstein has also been called a religious mystic because of his poetic attitude to nature, very much similar to Spinoza's.

independent of each other, namely, mind and matter. These arguments flow from the axiom: "No two things can influence and affect each other which have not some property in common." If creation resulted from the spirit acting upon matter, there must be something common in them; they must be essentially the same. Thus, Spinoza reaches the unitary concept of substance.

Creation is the outflowing of primal energy; it is activity necessary to a self-caused and self-causing existence. Everything is a form of Substance. The corollary to this cosmological conception is the abolition of the Cartesian psycho-physical parallelism in man. Spinoza maintains that body and soul (matter and spirit) are both real. They are not independent entities, but correlative attributes, which constitute the Substance. God and Nature, mind and matter, soul and body, can all be traced to a common denominator— a simple, primal Substance. That supreme principle cannot be the Absolute Spirit; because, then, there could be no creation. Therefore, it could only be a substance having extension, the property of motion being inherent in it. It is a material substance capable of developing mind.

Not only were cosmology and metaphysics freed from, the problem of dualism, which logically merged philosophy into a mystic theology, if not a fundamentalist religion. With the disappearance of the psycho-physical parallelism in man, his relation with nature was clearly traced. Man's body and mind (soul) are respectively con-substantial with the infinite attributes of Nature—extension and motion. Man as a whole, his body and mind, is a part of nature, the essence of which is the simple primal unitary Substance. Nothing super-natural intervenes in the rise of man out of the background of physical nature, just as cosmic creations need no divine creativeness. A part of nature, man's being and becoming are governed by the Natural Law. But just as the operation of the law in external nature can be mathematically

traced, the physiology and psychology of man, being subject also to the same law, are equally amenable to a similar treatment. Man's inner life is thus divested of all mysteries. A clear view of man's relation with nature helped the understanding of man, and the understanding further clarified the relation between man and nature.

Spinoza's philosophy is rigorously determinist, as any non-metaphysical naturalism should be. Having explored the ideological view of nature, it freed man from the whims of an inscrutable Providence. But man is a part of nature, and there is no purpose in or will behind the scheme of nature. Does not the corollary rob man also of purposefulness and will? As a matter of fact, Spinoza accepted Hobbes' view of social evolution in which man is reduced to an automaton. Man is deprived of an independent individuality. Human being is a mere mode of the Infinite Existence—a bubble in the eternally flowing stream. The disappearance of a responsible personality renders all set codes of morality pointless. All independence is dissolved by the acid of a stern causality[36]. There is none even for God, who is without intelligence and will. So, there can be no cosmic purpose or Divine Will. The concept of a free will in man is founded on the assumption of a universal will. Spinoza thus rejects the *Christian* idea of free will—the freedom to commit sin, or the will which is believed to be an echo of the Divine Will of teleology. That was not a charter of freedom but a voluntary bondage. Human will is desire, and every act of desire has a cause; therefore, no human act is the result of free will in the sense of not having a cause. If an absolute, undetermined, will is abstracted from the various particular acts of desire, then the concept of free will is entirely imaginary,

[36] Hejrel seized upon this half-truth, and on that basis set up the preposterous doctrine that freedom is the realisation of necessity. Marx applied the Hegelian interpretation of a metaphysical half-truth of Spinoza to the process of social evolution, and expounded his Historical Determinism, according to which moral cynicism is a revolutionary virtue.

removed from all reality; just as a stone falling through the air may imagine, if it could, that it is doing so out of free will.

Spinoza's determinism thus is far from being fatalistic. The objections to teleological predestination are not valid against rational and scientific determinism. The former fixes the end of existence independently of nature. Rational determinism is naturalistic; the ends of man's life are consonant with his nature, and therefore determined by it. Man's intelligence, desire, will, are in his nature. Natural determinism, as distinct from teleological predetermination, therefore, includes the operation of will as well as the other faculties of man. Spinoza repeatedly points out that, sines the ends of human existence are the ends of its nature, man is free. In that sense, determinism is self-determination. Man is in bondage to the extent that his life is determined by external causes; he is free to the extent that his life is self-determined.

Spinoza's Ethics, which is the most significant part of his philosophy, is based upon the harmony of the concepts of necessity and freedom. "All things whereof a man is the efficient cause are necessarily good; no evil can befall a man except through external causes." Morality is volitional; in ethics, freedom of will is unrestricted, and it is there that freedom really counts. At the same time, Spinoza traces the roots of morality to the determined processes of the operation of biological faculties. The instinct of self-preservation governs all human behaviour. "No virtue can be conceived as prior to this endeavour to preserve our own being," Spinoza thus laid the stable foundation of a secular ethics by tracing the roots of morality in the evolutionary process. But his doctrine was subjected to an utilitarian interpretation, which discredited the very idea of a secular morality. Ethical relativity of the Utilitarians became moral nihilism in the materialist philosophy of Marx. Meanwhile, the

humanist ethics of Spinoza inspired the romantic revolt (German Renaissance) against the rationalised Materialism of modern philosophy.

All the great spiritual leaders of Germany in the eighteenth century—Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller—were followers of Spinoza. Had Spinoza's philosophy really reduced man to an automaton, it could not be so enthusiastically welcomed by those great individualists. They felt that naturalist romanticism was threatening the sovereignty of man proclaimed by the Renaissance. Nevertheless, great humanists themselves, they could not disown the revolutionary achievements of man in the field of natural science. Goethe himself had contributed much to those achievements. Therefore, philosophically, they were all more or less inclined towards Materialism. Yet, they wanted a "living religion" to satisfy man's emotions. Spinoza's "Synthesis" provided them with a God who did not interfere in human affairs. The pantheistic interpretation of Spinoza's "Soulful Substance" was fully developed in the poetry of Goethe and Schiller. The intellectual life of Europe appeared to be involved in a new internal conflict—between the French Enlightenment and the German Renaissance. The former constructed a thorough-going materialist philosophy on the basis of Cartesian cosmology, and Spinoza's monism. It was set forth brilliantly in Holbach's *System of Nature,* which represented the eighteenth century high-water mark of modern philosophy. But at the same time, it provoked Goethe, a classical man of the Renaissance, to exclaim:

"If after all this book did us any harm, it was that we took a hearty dislike for philosophy and particularly metaphysics; on the other hand, we threw ourselves into living knowledge—experience, action and poetry."

That was the spirit of romanticism, which grew not in opposition to rationalism, but because of it. The bible of rationalist naturalism did no harm; it only forced the

German Renaissance to cast off its classicist tendency, and assert with a poetic passion man's creativeness in all the departments of life—science, society and culture. The "living knowledge" advocated by Goethe destroyed whatever was still left of religion in Germany; Spinoza's philosophy survived the attack of the scientific theology of Leibniz. The cardinal principle of the "living knowledge" was rejection of the scholastic dogma resurrected by Leibniz, that "matter cannot think". Kant dealt the final blow to theology and scholastic metaphysics. Goethe called for a complete break with the habit of looking back for inspiration by making Mephis to preach: "Everything has worth because it disappears."

The trail of scientific Humanism blazed by Spinoza with the torch of modern philosophy lighted by Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes, was not to be lost in his own pantheism, nor in the quicksand of transcendental Idealism (Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling). It broadened, to strike out in three directions: (1) Classicist Romanticism of the German Renaissance; (2) French Enlightenment; and (3) Dialectic Materialism of Marx through Hegel and Feuerbach. Modern philosophy is the ideology of no particular class; it is a human creation and therefore a human heritage.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW SCIENCE

THE hope of salvation by the Grace of God of Christianity helped the Graeco-Roman world survive the breakdown of the pagan civilisation. The new religion further reassured that, pending ultimate redemption, man's soul, even during its sojourn in this world, was constantly in the keeping of the benevolent Father in Heaven. With the spread of Christianity, the belief in man's relation with God became the sheet-anchor of the cultural life of Europe. The Christian faith largely outgrew its original pessimism, when the end of the world predicted in the Bible did not come at the appointed time. Europe came out of the dark ages with an optimistic view of life derived from the faith in man's living relation with God. The Kingdom of Heaven did not come, according to the original faith, because it is in every Christian who through prayer realises his relation with God at every moment of his life. Imperceptibly, the conception of God changed; the corollary was the mysticism of scholastic theology as against the anthropomorphism of the patristic age.

But the logic of human thought does not always obey the dictates of faith, however much rationalised or mystified may the latter be. Rationalisation of the scholastic theology undermined the fundamentalist faith of the full-blooded Christianity, and thus proved to be the solvent of super-naturalism, the corner-stone of the entire structure of the religious mode of thought. Absolved from the original sin of natural ignorance, human reason outgrew the limitations of its primitive manifestation (religion), and reasserted itself in the rebirth of science and philosophy.

In consequence of the struggle of several hundred years,

the intellectual life of Europe succeeded in casting off the illusion of man's relation with God. Naturalism replaced super-naturalism as the fundamental principle of metaphysical speculation. Nature having taken the place of God_r intellectual efforts to penetrate her secrets deposed theology from the proud position of the supreme science which it had occupied for a whole age. Metaphysical thought reared on the basis of an expanding knowledge of nature resulted in the elaboration of a natural philosophy indicating a promising approach to the problem which confronted European-intellect on the threshold of the modern time, namely, the problem of man's being and becoming in the context of the-physical world. And there was an allied problem, that of discovering the principle which regulates the relation of man-to man—the problem of man's being and becoming in the' context of the social world. How did the Natural Law operate so as to provide sanction for secular authority? In the last analysis, they were not two problems, but two aspects of the self-same problem—of man's being and becoming free from the illusion of his relation with God. Natural philosophy must be supplemented by a social philosophy, both co-ordinated and harmonised in a system of thought trying to understand and explain existence as a whole.

Man's vision and imagination liberated from the tyranny of theology and the prejudices of super-naturalism, there-was an exuberance of intellectual efforts. The new philosophy flourished in various systems built by individual thinkers of genius—Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, to mention only the most outstanding. Individualism asserted itself first in the field of philosophical thought.

Geometrical precision and mathematical reasoning guarded the new systems of universal philosophy against the possibility of truth being obscured by superfluous assumptions and irrelevant considerations. But they committed the

common error of ignoring factors which defied measurement by the geometrical yardstick, nor could be covered by mathematical equations. Those were human factors constituting the warp and woof of society; and no social philosophy was possible except on the basis of an understanding of the mechanics and dynamics of human relations—of psychology and anthropology.

Descartes tried to establish a relation between physics and psychology. His was an effort to interpret physiological processes in terms of analytical geometry. Eventually, upon the attainment of more accurate knowledge about the vital processes, that method, divested of its naivity, might be fruitful as far as it went. But by its very nature, it could not be applied to mind proper, to the opertion of thoughts and emotions. The laws of physics stated in terms of analytical geometry could not be applied to the metaphysics of psychology. Psycho-physical parallelism resulted from that failure. Until natural philosophy was freed from the fallacy of Cartesian dualism, its validity for living nature, and particularly for human relations, remained doubtful. Sheer dogmatism was the only way out of the impasse.

Mathematics placed natural philosophy on a sound foundation; but the exponents of naturalism failed to realise that, as a science of numbers, a method of stating propositions quantitatively, mathematics had obvious limitations. Descartes' distinction between the primary and secondary qualities 'was a bit of sophistry which glossed over the truth that certain aspects of the obiective reality could not be described in numerical terms. But for that reason they were not secondary; they belonged as much to the primal substance as the primary qualities. Subsequent development of physics, however, did bring some of the secondary qualities of matter within the scope of mathematical treatment. But a residue remained to make manifest the truth that mathematics is not omniscient.

In the first place, mathematics itself had to keep pace with the penetration of man's mind into the deeper secrets of nature. Secondly, in the process of that growth, mathematics reaches a point where it merges itself in logic; then, the degree of accuracy and exactitude demanded by it is no longer to be measured numerically, but by logical consistency; symbols of mathematical logic do not necessarily have any quantitative value. In the seventeenth century, and for a considerable time to come, mathematics had not yet reached that level of a method of abstract reasoning. It was still a science of numbers, and as such could not be the instrument for describing all the aspects of existence. Consequently, the natural philosophy of that time did not necessarily embrace the whole of nature. A different approach had to be found to the problems of human relations. A new science had still to be born; and the genius of man ushering in a new phase of human development proved equal to the task.

The Aristotelian concept of "natural justice" being ideally valid under all circumstances as the guiding principle of a harmonious social existence, provided the point of departure of the enquiry into the anatomy and physiology of social relations as well as their genesis. Bodin's *Republic* was the first significant attempt; it was the most systematic and complete treatise on politics composed after Aristotle. The *City of God* was a milestone on the long dreary way, because its author was a learned pagan before he became a devout Christian. But it lost its force when the fundamentalist religion with its faith in an anthropomorphic God gave way to theology. Thomas Aquinas' religious philo-sonhy was an all-embracing system, but in it the problem of human relations was simply non-existent, they being pre-detprmined by teleological rationalism. Nevertheless, the ancient notion of natural justice was retained in the tradition of the Roman Law, which shared with the Cannon

Law of the Church the governance of mediaeval society. On the authority of that tradition, Renaissance jurists revived the twin concept of "natural right", which constituted the foundation of the political thought at the close of the Middle-Ages. The formative process culminated In the crystallisation of a set of principles of political government and civil jurisprudence derived from the metaphysical concept of Natural Law.

In the transition period, thinking was necessarily confused by convention, prejudice and fear of orthodoxy. The search for a secular authority was obsessed with conventional notions. Grotius was the first to set aside the scriptural authority and go outside the jurisdiction of the Church in search of a principle of civil rights and a legal basis of society and government. Yet, the distinction between religion, on the one hand, and law and public morality, on the other, was not quite clear in his epoch-making work. Nevertheless, he did enunciate propositions which implied the distinction, to be more clearly grasped by other thinkers who followed him. The law of nature is immutable; God himself cannot alter it any more than he can alter a mathematical axiom. The law is embedded in the nature of man as a social being; therefore, it would be valid in the government of the world according to natural justice, even if there was no God or God did not look after the well-being of his creation.

That was clear enough. But there still remained the question: How did Natural Law operate through men so as to bring them together in a social organisation and thereafter to provide sanction for a secular authority. The question was about the origin of society and State. The autonomy of a secular authority conld not be established conclusivelv, its sanction could not be humanised, unless it was proved that society originated in human action. The required formulation of sound principles for a harmonious regulation of human relations and an equitable political

administration evidently presupposed an evolutionary view of society and a new method of historical research.

Rousseau said: "If one could behold the human race in its embryonic state, one could know something significant about its adult form." He had borrowed the idea from Giambattista Vico, who was the first to approach the problems of historical research from the anthropological and philological point of view. The suggestion that knowledge about the primitive state of the human species would throw light on the problems of civilised society implied an evolutionary view of human history.

The study of history received a strong impetus from the Renaissance. The relation between history and philosophy was a lively topic of the humanist educational theory. It was a generally held opinion that, as against the precepts of philosophy, history taught by examples and experience. Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* clearly evidenced the shift of emphasis from philosophy to history in the field of education and culture. "Knowledge are as pyramids whereof history is the base." Bolingbroke's famous formula, "History is philosophy teaching by example", was an echo of the humanist educational theory. The next impetus to historical research came from the Reformation, which contributed to the rise of historiography. Luther "was enforced to awake all antiquity, and to call former times to his succour to make a party against the present time; so that the ancient authors, both in divinity and humanity, which had long time slept in libraries, began generally to be read and revolved."[1] To fight the Reformers with their own weapon, the Jesuit Fathers engaged themselves in historical research with their characteristic thoroughness and profundity. Vico was born,

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[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*.

educated, and developed his *New Science*[2] in the kingdom of Naples, an active centre of the Counter-Reformation.

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In the seventeenth century, France and England stood at the vanguard of the movement of European intellect. In material progress and political grandeur also, they were ahead of all other nations. Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance, the birthplace of the bourgeoisie, the land of Lionardo, Galileo, Campanella, Bruno, had drifted into the backwaters of history. Papacy had regained supremacy; the Counter-Reformation was rampant. Yet, it was in that atmosphere of triumphant reaction that the *New Science* of humanity was born, to proclaim the most stirring idea of all times— History is Humanity Creating Itself. That is the basic idea of Vice's *New Science*.[3]

Bossuet, who has been bracketed with Vico and Herder as "the historian of humanity", was an older contemporary of the former. He also was steeped in the tradition of Catholicism, and drew inspiration from the anthropomorphism of St. Augustin as against the religious philosophy of the rationalist Thomas Aquinas. Yet, he was the author of one of the very earliest works on the philosophical interpretation of history. His was the first significant attempt to interpret history as a process determined by causes inherent in itself. He held that God operated "through secondary causes. It is His will that every great change should have its roots in the ages that went before."[4] Bossuet's work records the highly instructive fact that the determinist view of history

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[2] *Principles of A New Science of the Nature of Nations, from which art derived New Principles of the Natural Law of Peoples,* by Giambattista Vico, published at Naples in 1725.

[3] The signal achievement of Vico was not only brilliant imagination and the conception of history as man-made, the expression of the human spirit shaping environment in a pattern of development and decline, but to apprehend the role of the masses and the unconscious wisdom of the race. (Ses Emery Neff, *The Poetry of History).*

[4] *Discourse Sur L'Histoire Universale.*

logically resulted from the teleological conception, just as the mechanistic view of the physical processes of nature also flowed from the theological doctrine of a law-governed Universe.

The separation of the philosophy of history from religious tradition began with Montesquieu, who was a younger contemporary of Vico. A clearly secular, though metaphysical, conception of the Natural Law was expounded in *Esprit de Loi.* But Montesquieu's earlier book, *Grandeur et Decadence des Remains,* was the first important treatise on the philosophy of history.

These and numerous other minor contributions to historical research and to the development of an evolutionary view of history went in the making of the *New Science.*

The most baffling problem of dogmatic historicism (the Marxist materialist conception of history or Historical Materialism) is to explain its own origin and originator. The anthropological and philological approach to the problems of historical research enabled Vico not only to expound a determinist, evolutionary view of history; but he was the first to interpret epoch-making historical events in terms of class struggle.[5] Yet, the herald of the "revolutionary ideology of the proletariat" was a sincerely religious man, enjoying the patronage of high dignitaries of the Roman Church and also of the rank reactionary Spanish monarchy. Nor could any connection be traced between the undoubtedly revolutionary *New Science* and the rise of the bourgeoisie in revolt against mediaevalism. It was the creation of a typically mediaeval mind.

Like Bossuet, Vico also drew inspiration from the learned

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[5] "The vindication of the rational nature of man as man was an historical process, the same process by which the rationality was achieved; and the main spring of the process was the dialectical opposition of classes." (Intro-duction to the *Autobiography of Giambattista Vico,* translated by M. H. Fisch and T. G. Bergin).

pagan who became the tallest personality of the patristic age. He admits that a passage in the *City of God* enable him to resolve the conflict between his Catholic faith and his philosophy of law which was evidently secular, if not heretical. His object was to establish a "rational civil theology of divine providence" in the place of the "natural theology" founded upon a radically deficient philosophy preached by a succession of thinkers from Epicures to Hobbes, and reinforced by the revival of the physical sciences. Having studied St. Augustin's famous book, Vico saw that "a reinterpretation of the action of Providence in history" would serve his purpose. The reinterpretation was a veritable *tour de force* of the fundamentalist religious mentality; it was a new exegis of the doctrine of creation: the Biblical doctrine was applicable, in the pre-historic time, only to the Hebrews; the rest of the race, the gentile peoples, were subject to the "general Providence" (as against the special Grace reserved for the chosen people), which operated through nature and Bossuet's "secondary causes." Thus, Vico arrived at his "rational civil theology of divine Providence." It is rational and civil to the extent that a wide latitude of freedom and choice is conceded to mankind, including the Hebrews, after their emergence from the Biblical antiquity. And the *New Science,* tracing the origin of society in primitive human creativeness, is a theology because the self-operating process of social evolution is nonetheless "providential"; therefore, individual efforts with freedom to choose serve a collective purpose, and society as a whole moves towards civilisation. The religious obsessions of a mediaeval mentality led Vico to believe that his *New Science* was based upon a new exegis, the inspiration for which came from St. Augustin. In reality, it was founded upon the pioneering efforts of precisely those great thinkers whose supposed errors Vico proposed to rectify, namely, Grotius, Hobbes and other Natural Law theorists, like Selden and Pufendorf. It was from

Grotius that Vico learned the very important lesson that philosophy and philology could be combined into a system of universal law; and the humanist theory of knowledge, which constituted the foundation of the *New Science,* had been outlined by Hobbes. "Of arts, some are demonstrable, others undemonstrable; and demonstrable are those the construction of the subjects whereof is in the power of the artist himself who, in his demonstration, does no more but deduce the consequence of his own operation. The reason whereof is this, that the science of every subject is derived from a prerecognition of the causes, generation and construction of the same; and consequently, where the causes are known, there is place for demonstration. Geometry is demonstrable, for the lines and figures, from which we reason, are drawn and described by ourselves; and civil philosophy is demonstrable, because we make the commonwealth."[6]

The fundamental principle of Vico's *New Science*—history is humanity creating itself—was thus conceived in Hobbes' civil philosophy, which he deduced from the mechanistic natural philosophy of the seventeenth century. Vico's contribution was to demonstrate its operation in history from the very beginning of human society. Bacon had held up ancient Greece and Rome as "exemplar States", presumably founded by recondite philosophers and wise legislators—the archetypal men. Vico showed that "the history of the exemplar States extant in good perfection" was woven by poets with tissues of legends, fables and myths. He further proved that the anthropological and philological approach to the problems of comparative mythology and the "metaphysic of human mind" enabled one to reconstruct the actual history not only of the poetically described (in the epics) Graeco-Roman antiquity, but also of the prehistoric age.

"In the night of thick darkness which envelops the earliest antiquity, there shines the eternal and never fading

[6] Hobbes, *De Cive.*

light of truth: that the world of human society has certainly been made by man, and its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind."[7]

The painstaking search that led the lonesome scholar in a mediaeval school of law to the discovery of the master-key to the problems of human history was inspired by a lesson learned from Grotius, Pufendorf and, above all, Hobbes, "that the first founders of civil society were not philosophers filled with recondite wisdom, as he had hitherto thought, but man— beasts devoid of culture or humanity, yet guided by an obscure instinct of self-preservation that in time would draw them into social compact and thus lay the foundation stone of civilisation."[8]

The inspiring lesson learned from his predecessors who had revived the ancient concept of Natural Law as the sanction for the revolt against the agelong domination of theology and the teleological view of life, reminded Vico of what he had read in the great poem of Lucretius—about the origin of society. In his youth, Vico came under the influence of the "new philosophy" which flourished in certain secret circles of the Neapolitan society, as a whole haunted by the shadow of the Inquisition. In the olden days, Naples was the main centre of Epicureanism in Italy. Drawing upon that tradition as well as the more recent of Bruno and Campanella, "the new philosophy" was "Epicurean and atheist". Some of Vico's friends of that time were actually hauled before the Inquisition for having held the view that "before Adam, there were men who were composed of atoms, as all animals were; and the shrewder among them began to build houses, farms, forts and cities", so on and so forth.[9] In his Epicurean mood, Vico wrote a poem[10] on

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[7] *New Science.*

[8] Fisch and Bergin, Introduction to Vico's *Autobiography.*

[9] Ibid.

[10] Quoted from the records at the National Library of Naples by H. P. Adams in *The Life and Writings of Giambattista Vico.*

the Lucretian style, most unbecoming for a devout Christian, although later in his life, having found inspiration in St. Augustin, he betrayed the bad taste of disparaging Lucretius. Nor did his religious atavism allow him to stop at that; he claimed to have developed his *New Science* independently of all the philosophers from Epicures to Hobbes. But that was an excusable vanity on the part of a lonesome scholar, who was frustrated in his academic ambition.

However, the sequence of historical facts is that Gassendi revived the Epicurean tradition in Western Europe; Hobbes incorporated it in modern philosophy; and Vico took up the threads from Hobbes as also from Grotius, to weave them into the outline of a new science—of history and society. Vico's critique of the concept of Natural Law was not corrective; it brought out the implication of the doctrine. So long as it remained a philosophical abstraction, it was impossible to demonstrate how Natural Law affected human life. Vico opposed his doctrine of the "Natural Law of the peoples" to the "Natural Law of the philosophers", and showed, in the revealing light of his new method of enquiry into historic and prehistoric antiquity, that the universal law of the peoples grew naturally with the growth of society; and therefore it was the only natural law as far as human life, individual and collective, was concerned. Human society, regarded as an organism, was placed in the context of the mechanistic processes of physical nature.

Vico traced the origin of law in the human mind, and explained historical changes in terms of the evolution of man's mind, which was itself a natural process. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that, if physicists sought to discover laws of nature by the study of natural phenomena, philosophers must seek the laws of historical change and social evolution in the events of human life and in an understanding of the operation of the human mind. Laws are born in the conscience of mankind. In the earlier stages of

social evolution, they are conceived as codes and rituals of religion, because the primitive man is incapable of thinking in terms of abstract ideas. The original obscure idea of law becomes clearer and better defined in course of time, in proportion with the growth of the human mind. Finally, the conception of law is abstracted from concrete religious forms which are thus replaced by rational philosophical principles. The critique of the metaphysical doctrine of Natural Law thus leads Vico to the position of Grotius. The difference is that he reaches there analytically. With Grotius, Natural Law is an hypothesis; for Vico, it is an empirkal fact. And that was certainly a great advance—but in the same direction. According to Vico, the concept of law passes through three successive stages—the divine (religious), the heroic (of the epics) and the human (civil). The last stage in substance is merely the abstract philosophical expression of the sense of justice, co-operation and harmony felt vaguely by the progenitors of the human race. Thus, Vico discovers an enduring principle of universal law, revealed in his *New Science* – "concerning the nature (genesis) of nations, from which has issued their humanity (civilisation), which in every case began with religion and was completed by sciences."[11] In the same place, Vico indicates the link between the conclusions of his predecessors and his own discovery: "The gentile nations have arisen from the ferine wanderings of Hobbes' licentious and violent men, of Grotius' solitary, weak and needy simpletons, of Pufendorf's vagrants cast away into this world without divine care or help."

The *New Science* solved the difficulty of establishing the relation between the two stages of human existence—between the primitive and the civilised. That was indeed a great achievement; only, Vico did that not by going ahead of his predecessors, but by a recoil from his original Epicurean

[11] Synopsis of the work prefixed to it.

position, from which the *New Science* could be logically deduced, by setting up the anachronistic doctrine of a "civil theology of divine providence". The gratuitous introduction of a rationalised teleology, however, does not minimise the historical significance of Vico's philosophy of law and history. It logically compelled him to make irrelevant interpolations, which lent the *New Science* to the most reactionary interpretations directly contrary to its native spirit.

The defect of the system of Grotius was to hold on to the Roman idea of a parallel development of the Natural and Positive Law. The latter was man-made; but what was its sanction? Having disputed the divine origin of mankind and society, he left Positive Law hanging in the air. There remained a hiatus between the rationally conceived Natural Law and the man-made Positive Law. Vico bridged the gulf. "The Positive Law of all nations, throughout history, is a continual advance, keeping pace with the progress of civilisation, towards the philosophic conception of a Natural Law founded upon the principles of human reason and nature." The concept of a universal Natural Law thus was an abstraction from the experiences of human life; it was a creation of human nature and reason. That is why Vico started from the proposition that the idea of law originated in man's conscience.

The basic discovery of the *New Science,* that history is humanity creating itself, and Vico's unfounded claim that his discovery represented a break with the tradition of the philosophical concept of Natural Law, were hailed by the nineteenth century post-revolutionary romanticists as a revolt against rationalism, and the scientific justification of their mystic nee-catholic doctrines. This tendencious interpretation of Vico's philosophy is backed up by the far-fetched argument that his reconstruction of the development of society and civilisation was made possible by the discovery that "the first gentile peoples were poets who spoke in

poetic characters", and that he called this discovery "the master-key ". On this thin evidence, a sweeping judgment is pronounced. "It is at this point that we can observe most clearly that transition from rationalism to historicism, in Vico's own mind, which took place in the thought of Europe generally in the century after his death."[12]

The superficiality of the judgment is evident. Historicism is to interpret social evolution as a determined process; it is application of rationalism to the study of history. Vico exactly did that. Yet, he is hailed as a mighty rebel against rationalism!

"From Lucretius, Bacon and the Natural Law theorists, Vico derived suggestions which had an irresistible appeal to a mind struggling to free itself from the last remaining shackles of intellectualism. Certainly, to posit as the founders of civilisation not sages but brutes; to posit as the primitive and therefore basic forms of apprehension not reason but instinct, feeling, intuition; to posit as the primitive and basic modes of generalisation not the universals of science and philosophy, but those of poetry—was to emancipate oneself at last from Descartes, and give a new dignity to those philological and historical disciplines which he had despised as resting on inferior cognitive faculties."[13]

At the time of Vico, one might differentiate reason from instinct, feeling and intuition, regarding the former as a metaphysical category and the latter as concrete human attributes. To-day, such a distinction is scientifically untenable, although there are philosophers who insist on living in the ivory tower of their obscurantism. Vico was a critic of metaphysical rationalism, and as such humanised reason; thereafter, the entire course of his *New Science,* barring the irrelevant second-hand interference of Providence, is strictly

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[12] Fisch and Bergin, introduction to Vico's *Autobiography.*

[13] Ibid.

rationalist; it interprets the origin of society and its subsequent development as causally determined. Therefore, he must be recognised as the founder of historicism, which was elaborated, in a grossly one-sided manner, by Karl Marx more than a hundred years after Vico's death, as the dialectics of history or Historical Materialism.

"Vico dared attempt to ford the quagmire of metaphysics, and although he was bogged down, he gave footing to a more fortunate thinker (Montesquieu) on the spirit of the laws of the nations." (Diderot). Vico was the first to interpret history so as to show that heroes and great men are the products of their time, which can be understood properly only by referring it back to the events of preceding epochs. "He interpreted the heroic and divine figures of primitive history as ideas and symbols." (Michelet). Hailing Vico as one of the "historians of humanity" (with Bossuet and Herder), Victor Cousin said: "The fundamental character of the *New Science* is the introduction into history of a point of view purely human."[14]

Those authoritative pronouncements, to which many more could be added, summarise the correct appraisal of Vico's philosophy and his place in the intellectual history of modern Europe. He reconciled rationalism with Humanism, and therefore could be called the harbinger of an intellectual movement which tempered rationalist metaphysics and mechanistic naturalism with faith in the creativeness of man. He promoted the humanist resurgence in the revolutionary romanticism of Rousseau and also in the aesthetic exuberance of the German Renaissance.

At the same time, it was only natural that the mediaeval mentality of Vico should riddle his *New Science* with irrelevant and atavistic interpolations which could be picked up and given undue importance by tendentious interpreters.

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[14] Lectures on the History of Philosophy, at the Sorbonne in 1828.

Having lived all his life in a place which at that time happened to be outside the main currents of European progress,[15] social as well as intellectual, Vico and his epoch-making work remained practically unknown outside his native country. Towards the end of the eighteenth country, Goethe and Herder visited Italy and got some general idea of Vico's work. At the same time, Niebuhr and Savigny during their Roman visits also came to know of Vico. Thereafter, Vico's ideas spread in Germany, and their doubtful aspects influenced the post-Kantian philosophy, not excluding Hegel's philosophy of law and history. Through Hegel, Vico's organic view of history went into the making of the Marxist materialist conception of history, and later on provided a scientific sanction for fascist totalitarianism.[16] It has been maintained that Vico was "the true precursor of all German thought", from Kant, and that Hegelianism became popular in Italy because it was but an elaboration of Vico's ideas.[17]

But it was thanks to Victor Cousin and his brilliant pupil, Michelet, that Vico and his work gained European recognition. "Nowhere out of Italy has Vico been studied with so much sympathy as in France. What of European reputation he possesses, is very largely due to Michelet's *Oeuvres Choisies de Vico.*"[18] While, on the one hand, Vico's philosophy was hailed by revolutionary thinkers like Michelet and Marx, his Christian piety and supposed anti-rationalism com-

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[15] Voltaire first broke the Jewish-Christian framework of history. He inaugurated the history of ideas, drew into general history the arts and literature, and made gestures in the direction of social and economic history. By obliterating the distinction between the socred and the profane, he brought a new kind of unity into the study of the past. Like many historians, he felt the precariousness of civilisation. Vico had already carried this emancipation farther, but his surroundings were unpropitious. (Emery Neff, *The Poetry of History).*

[16] Vico and Mazzini are "the two greatest forerunners of Fascism." (Mario Palmieri, *The philosophy of Fascism).*

[17] Bertrando Spavento, *Italian Philosophy in Its Relation to European Philosophy.*

[18] Robert Flinta, *Vico.*

mended it also to the neo-catholicism of Joseph de Maistre— the prophet of post-revolutionary romanticism, just as later on it was annexed by Fascism, the post-revolutionary reaction-of the twentieth century.

"But neither Duni nor anyone else who borrowed this-or that from Vico in the pre-revolutionary period was able to free himself altogether from the prevailing rationalist temper, to grasp Vico's thought as an integral whole, or even to place himself at its living centre. Not until the Enlightenment had run its full course, not until a social movement arose for which Vico's historical vision was a vital necessity, was there wide-spread serious study and adequate comprehension of it. This movement was the post-revolutionary" reaction whose foremost representatives were the Federalists-in America, Burke in England, De Maistre in France and Vincenzo Cuoco in Italy."[19]

Duni and Cuoco were among the principal interpreters-of Vico in Italy. Vico's philosophy, of course, was a much discussed topic in his native land before it gained continental reputation. The controversy over the ferine origin of the gentile humanity began during Vico's lifetime. Duni was the leader of the opinion which defended Vico's doctrine. The opposing school was led by Finetti, a Dominican monk. He successfully exposed that, despite Vico's scholastic attempt to buttress his *New Science* on an arbitrary exegis, it was essentially irreligious. He very correctly argued that to hold that society originated in a feral state of the human species, and that internal dialectics governed its subsequent evolution, was to repudiate the authority of the Bible and to pull down the entire structure of catholic thought. He also pointed out that the *New Science* was imbued with Epicureanism as expounded by Lucretius. Nevertheless, Cuoco, who came to be recognised as the ablest interpreter

[19] Fisch and Bergin, Introduction to Vico's A*utobigraphy.*

of Vico, opposed the Neapolitan revolution of 1799 on the ground that the revolutionary philosophy, which resulted from the *New Science* had no roots in the Italian soil, the national philosophy expounded by Machiavelli and Vico having in advance rejected the abstract rationalism of the Enlightenment. And Croce, mainly responsible for the neo-Hegelian interpretation of Vico, calls Cuoco's work as "the first vigorous manifestation of Vichean thought", which he describes as "anti-abstract and historical, the beginning of the new historiography founded on the conception of the organic development of peoples, and of the new politics of national liberalism, at once revolutionary and moderate."[20]

Inspite of his having anticipated Marx by more than a century as the founder of dialectic historicism, in our time, Vico was monopolised by the opposite brand of totalitarianism. The over-riding conception of the universal law of nations did not preclude Vico from endowing particular nations with "eternal properties which determine that the nature of each shall be such and not otherwise."[21] The chauvinistic cult of national genious can be easily deduced from this doctrine. Vico's cyclical theory of history associated with reactionary social ideas could logically lead to Spenglerism—the Downfall of the West; its similarity with Sorokin's revivalist doctrine of culture cycles is also remarkable.

The three recurring cycles of history are "the age of gods", "the age of heroes "and "the age of man ". Having described the age of man as "the vindication of the rational nature of man", Vico gives vent to amazingly reactionary social ideas which rule out the possibility of democracy, to justify the cyclical theory. By declaring that the natural

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[20] Benedetto Croce, *Philosophy of Giambattista Vico.*

[21] *Autobiography.*

law of the peoples of the seventeenth century was the product of the second "age of man", Vico anticipated Spengler's gloomy oracle.[22]

Croce interpreted the *New Science* as a sanction for nationalism, and dedicated his book on the philosophy of Vico to the would-be Nazi philosopher Windelband. Lecturing at Heidelberg on philosophy of history during the first world war, the latter contrasted Vico as the historian of national culture with the cosmopolitan Herder. "Specially interesting in Vico is his cyclical theory of historical process, with its *corsi* and *recorsi,* and very acute and just is his observation that once a people has risen from barbarism to civilisation, it falls back into a new barbarism which is worse than the first. We are to-day in an excellent position to confirm his observation by the comparative method, since we have to do with the sort of barbarism in our antagonists on the one side (Russia) and with the second in those on the other (France and England)."[23]

Vico would certainly turn in his grave if he heard his present-day followers. With Sorel, he became the recognised philosopher of Fascism. "National-Socialist scholarship followed the lead of (Italian) Fascism in deriving their common philosophy from Vico and Sorel."[24]

This irony of Vice's fate logically follows from reading

[22] But the age of men ran its course too. The discipline, respect for law, and social solidarity of the Patrician Orders gave way to a humane and easy tolerance. Philosophy took the place of religion. Equality led to licence. There was dispersion of private interests and decline of public spirit. The meanest citizen could press the public force into the service of his appetites and whims, or sell his vote to the highest bidder among faction leaders and demagogues. In this last phase of "the age of men", the humanisation and softening of customs and law continued, until breakdown within or conquest from without brought on a reversion to barbarism, and a new cycle of the three ages began..... The natural law of the philosophers of the seventeenth century was a product of the second "age of men". (Fisch and Bergin, Introduction to Vice's *Autobiography).*

[23] Windelband, *Kant-Studien.*

[24] Walter Witzenmann, *Politisc/ier Atavismus und Sozialer Mythos.*

in the *New Science* a revolt against rationalism. The Marxists are afraid of claiming his historicism as their heritage because it has already been captured by their opponents. But the humanist philosophy of history founded by Vico on the basis of the Epicurean tradition and the pioneering works of Bacon, Hobbes, Grotius and others, must be rescued from tendentious misrepresentations and superficial expositions. History is humanity creating itself; man makes his own history—these are declarations which must be written in letters of gold in the charter of human freedom. They were pronounced by man's reason, free from spiritual slavery, as reaffirmaticn of his faith in himself. The philosophy of history as formulated by Vico harmonises Humanism with naturalism, freedom with determinism, will with reason, romanticism with rationalism. Vico consciously was not a man of the Re.naissance. Nevertheless, he made a science of Humanism. The New Science of history was a creation of the revolt of man. From the declaration that "the social world is certainly the work of man", Vico deduced the corollary, which is the fundamental principle of modern democracy. "And governments must be conformable to the nature of the governed; governments are even a result of that nature."

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Vice's ideas, being in tune with the spirit of the age, had imperceptibly flown into the main currents of European life before he was discovered and misrepresented by the post-revolutionary romanticists. Through Rousseau, they inspired the French Revolution which deified Reason. On the other hand, Herder had come in touch with them before he began the construction of the philosophy of the history of humanity. But Herder had started thinking by himself, and developed his philosophy of history independently of Vico, rejecting the weak points of the latter's historiography, which laid him open to reactionary interpretations. If Bossuet,

Vico and Herder were the historians of humanity, philosophically, Herder was the greatest of them all. In him, the genetic or historical method of studying the complicated structure of human culture reached a logically consistent form.[25] He traced the origin of civilisation to primitive human impulses; but though himself the pioneer of romanticism in Germany, Herder did not share Rousseau's idealisation of the simplicity and spontaneity of the primitive. On the other hand, he rejected the "civil theology of divine providence" invented by Vice's mediaeval mentality and religious atavism. In his search for the genesis of human society, Vico did not penetrate deep enough into the origin of languages; he only stated the fact that the primitive spoke in poetic characters. Herder discovered the great truth that the origin of articulate speech marks the rise of the *homo sapiens,* and, rejecting the venerable belief that it was a divine gift, traced it to the mental evolution which differentiates the human from earlier biological species. "Without discovering language, human mind could not be what it is."

Romanticism did not blind Herder to another great truth of human history; rejecting the theory of fear, popularised by Hume, he held that religion was the creation of primitive rationalism; it was the first attempt of mankind to explain natural phenomena. The deep-seated moral feelings of mankind provided the vitality to the higher forms of

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[25] "It is this deep conviction that changing phenomena have unchanging laws which, in the seventeenth century, guided in a limited field Bacon,. Descartes and Newton; which, in the eighteenth century, was applied to every part of the material Universe; and which it is the business of the nineteenth century to extend to the history of the human intellect. This last department of enquiry we owe chiefly to Germany; for, with the single exception of Vico, no one even suspected the possibility of arriving at complete generalisations respecting the progress of man, until shortly before the French Revolution, when the great German thinkers began to cultivate this, the highest and most difficult of all studies." (Buckle, *Introduction tot the History of Civilisation.*

religion. The success of Christianity, according to Herder, was due to the fact that it was essentially humanist. He interpreted it as a system of morality. Of course, all great religions, Islam for example, cannot be explained so very simply. But the central idea of Herder's philosophy of religion is that it is associated with human mind in certain stages of evolution; and that is a correct idea, historically a& well as psychologically.

As regards the process of human evolution as a whole, Herder's view was rigorously naturalistic, free from Vico's postulate of Biblical exegis and civil theology. He regarded man as a part of nature, and all the variegated forms of his-development, mental, spiritual, physical, as natural processes, On the other hand, he disagreed with Kant's view that human development was the gradual manifestation of the growing faculty of rational free will revolting against the operations of nature. Thus, Herder was opposed to metaphysical rationalism. He rejected the mystic notion that there is an antagonism between human reason and physical nature, and held that, a part of nature, man, derived his reason as well as the freedom to will, from nature. "Human history is a pure natural history of human powers, actions-and propensities, modified by time and place."

The scientific thought of the nineteenth century was deeply influenced on the one hand by the rationalism, (mechanistic naturalism) of the Enlightenment and, on the other hand, by the no less rational romanticism as developed by Herder. Both the thought-currents carried the positive aspects of Vico's *New Science,* which was thus integrated in the general pattern of modern democratic culture.[28] Its

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[26] "Turgot made an admirable application of the idea of humanity to history in his Discourses at the Sorbonne. The same idea is implied through, out in Lessing's Essay on *The Education of the Human Race.* Herder'? genial and eloquent *Ideen Zur Philosophic der GeschicKte der Menschheif* made its significance popularly appreciated and definitely gave it its rightful position in historical science." (Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History),*

doubtful and clearly reactionary features also flowed into parallel channels, one to be bogged in the backwaters of the post-revolutionary neo-Catholic romanticism, and the other, through Hegel, to feed the mutually antagonistic cults of totalitarianism, communist and fascist.

Having survived the post-revolutionary reaction in France, and the *Sturn and Drang* of the German Renaissance, the truths discovered by Vico were not left to be perverted by Marxist dogmatism and subsequently to be vulgarised by the regimented fascist scholarship. In Germany, it succombed to the anti-intellectual reaction to Hegelian fever fantasies. But the "very small school of historical writings, which began in the eighteenth century with Vico, was continued by Condorcet, Herder, Hegel and Comte, and which found its last great representative in Buckle."[27]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the conservative academic circles in England abandoned the time-honoured doctrine that history was a branch of literature. Robert Flint's *History of the Philosophy of History* was an epoch-making book. He never wrote the second volume "to trace with fulness and in detail the effects of Vico's historical speculations". Instead, he wrote a small treatise specially on Vico, which for the first time introduced the *New Science* directly to the English intellectual world. The Darwinian doctrine having revealed the animal origin of the human species, the evolutionary view of history was empirically established. As a matter of fact, the theory that the foundation of society was laid not by wise law-givers, but man-beasts living in a feral state, logically implied the Darwinian doctrine of descent. "The evolutionary theory in science and the historical method (historicism) are twin developments of the same fundamental movement in thought

[27]Leckey, *History of Rationalism.*

which characterised the mental climate of the nineteenth century."[28]

Hallam and Gibbon were not philosophers of history; but they were among the first who wrote history according to the new philosophy. Gibbon judged civilisation and progress by the criterion of the happiness of man, and held that political freedom was the essential condition of human happiness. Hallam's conception of history embraced the whole movement of society. Academic historians like Bury, Myres, Powell, Firth, walked in the footsteps of their illustrious predecessors when they applied to their subject the evolutionary view of science in general.

"The growth of historical study in the nineteenth century has been determined and characterised by the same general principle which has underlain the simultaneous developments of the study of nature, namely, the genetic idea. The historical conception of nature, which has produced the history of the solar system, the story of the earth, the genealogies of telluric organisms, and has revolutionised natural science, belongs to the same order of thought as the conception of human history as a continuous genetic causal process—a conception which has revolutionised historical research and made it scientific. The present condition of the human race is simply and strictly the result of a causal series— a continuous succession of changes where each stage arises causally out of the preceding; and the business of historians is to trace this genetic process, to explain each change, and ultimately to grasp the complete development of humanity."[291]

"History, in its common and more popular sense, is the study of man's dealings with other men, and the adjustment of working relations between human groups. But there is a large sense in which human history merges in natural history,

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[28] A. L. Rowse, *The Use of History* – Introduction to,the "Teach Yourself History" series published by the English Universities Press.

[29] J. B. Bury, *Selected Essays.*

and studies the dealings of man with nature. Man's prehistory merges in the pageant of the animal world."[30]

History "deals with the condition of masses of mankind living in a social state. It seeks to discover the laws that govern this condition and bring about changes we call progress and decay, and development and degeneracy—to understand the process that gradually or suddenly make up or break up those political and economic agglomerations we call States—to find out the circumstances affecting the various tendencies that show their power at different times."[31]

"History is not easy to define; but to me, it seems the record of the life of societies of men, of the changes which those societies have gone through, of the ideas which have determined the actions of those societies, and of the material conditions which have helped or hindered their development."[32]

Those are opinions of "bourgeois historians" as the Marxists would call them. But none of them "finds the birthplace of history in the misty cloud formations of heaven" (Marx), nor can they be placed among the gentlemen whom Marx ridiculed for trying to understand history out of the context of the relations of man to nature. This general acceptance of the evolutionary view of history proves, in the teeth of Marxist intolerance, that science has no class affiliation; that the dynamics of ideas, being manifestation of the Natural Law through human intelligence, unfolds itself independently of the sequence of the physical events of history. This autonomy of the world of thought is the foundation of the spiritual (in the secular sense) freedom—the highest ideal of human existence.

The movement of thought initiated by Grotius and Hobbes, given a wider sweep by Vico, and raised on a higher

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[30] Sir John Myers, *The Dawn of History.*

[31] York Powell, quoted by A. L. Rowse.

[32] Sir Charles Firth, quoted by A. L. Rowse.

philosophical level by Herder, indicated the theoretical approach to the problems of social relations which challenged human ingenuity at the dawn of modern times. The experience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrated the creativeness of man in his relation to nature as well as in the social and political field. That was an epoch of revolutions—scientific, social and political; and the very idea of revolution is romantic; it claims for man the right to change the conditions of life. It is also rational to the extent that social changes take place of necessity. Therefore, the revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were heralded by the "Age of Reason."

CHAPTER IX

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

THE eighteenth century is known in history as the Age of Reason; at the same time, during that period of great significance, rationalism definitely broke away from its metaphysical tradition, and assumed a meaning almost identical with romanticism, which was the other characteristic feature of the intellectual life of that epoch of decisive events. While a rapidly increasing expansion of scientific knowledge reinforced the belief in the unvarying laws of nature, it also became a prevailing belief that reason was equally applicable to human affairs, and that, rationally regulated, they would lead to universal good. Not only was man capable of solving all the riddles of the Universe, of penetrating deeper and deeper into the secrets of nature; freed from ignorance, prejudices and superstitions, human intelligence could also find the ways and means for a rational, and therefore harmonious, regulation of social relations. Reason was no longer only *.1* subject of philosophical discussions; it was to become the regulating factor of practical life.

It was a period of great intellectual activity; the freedom of thought, naturally amongst those capable of thinking, practically knew no bounds. Scientific investigation was breaking up new grounds; daring ideas were conceiving new possibilities of moral and material progress; bolder imagination was opening up new vistas of freedom to be enjoyed in all the aspects of human life. The outstanding figures of that period of intellectual ferment and emotional exuberance all believed in the unlimited possibility of science and relied on human reason as the only reliable guide in life. On the one hand, Voltaire's ecclecticism never transgressed the common ground of agreement; and on the other, the prophet of

irrationalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, believed that in his doctrine of social contract he had found a rational sanction for politics. As a matter of fact, those two utterly discordant personalities, between themselves, represented the spirit of the Age of Reason; the almost classicist rationalism of the one and the unbridled romanticism of the other were the two poles of the axis on which the world of eighteenth century Europe revolved.

The triumphal march of science, however, was the inexhaustible source of inspiration for the intellectual life of the eighteenth century. Newton's law of gravitation seemed to solve all the problems of celestial mechanics. Not only in physics, a good deal of knowledge about the life of plants and animals was derived from the researches of Linne' and Buffon; Lavoisier and Priestley laid the foundation of modern chemistry. Descartes' theory of the vortices failed to stand the test of mathematics as further developed by Maupertuis, d'Alembert and many others. The reconsideration of Cartesian cosmology, compelled by the subsequent expansion of physical knowledge and improvement of mathematical technique, led to a progressive development of the mechanistic view until Laplace dispensed with the hypothesis of a prime mover.

The powerful influence of Piere Bayle was another factor which helped eighteenth century rationalism transcend the limitations of Descartes' metaphysics. Bayle was a Cartesian, but bolder than the master. With Descartes, science and religion were not inconsistent; reason and faith went hand in hand. Bayle pointed out the inconsistency. He wielded the Cartesian weapon of scepticism with a greater skill, and mercilessly. In the *Critical and Historical Dictionary,* there is indeed no open attack upon religion; but every line was intended to awaken doubt. Bayle was the first to maintain that morality could be entirely independent of religion. Even Voltaire's corrosiveness would not go that far, although

he was profoundly influenced by "the master of doubt", as Bayle was called. The campaign for the freedom of thought initiated by Bayle was fought out "under the generalship of Voltaire..... The revolution was prepared in the seventeenth century by the European publicity of the writings of Bayle."[1]

By the eighteenth century, naturalism could call itself a scientific system of thought. It was possible to generalise the empirical knowledge of nature, acquired by the different branches of science, into a philosophy. Until then, natural philosophy was one-sided, based only on physics. In the eighteenth century, it was greatly reinforced by a growing volume of knowledge of the animate world including the anatomy and physiology of the human body. With the broadened basis of scientific knowledge, Sensationalism became the generally accepted form of natural philosophy. Condillac went beyond Locke and rejected reflexion as a source of knowledge. He traced the root of all knowledge to a single origin. The object of his system—improved and amplified Sensationalism —was "to show how all our knowledge and all our faculties are derived from sensations." Locke had doubted the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas; but his own theory of knowledge was not quite clearly differentiated, since it recognised reflexion as a source of knowledge. Condillac freed Sensationalism from that ambiguity. He discarded the doctrine of the immateriality of mind, and held that mind was nothing but a faculty of sensation, out of which all faculties evolved as the result of the impact of external objects on the senses. Following Gassendi and Hobbes, he identified knowledge with sensation, and maintained that inferences drawn from the examination of animal organisms were applicable in the observation of human mind.[2] The other

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[1] Paul Souquet, *La Revolution Francaise.*

[2] *Traite des Animaux.*

cardinal feature of Condillac's scientific naturalism was to deny that there was any innate faculty. He wrote: Locke "has certainly thrown a good deal of light on the subject (cognition) but he has left some obscurity. All the faculties of the soul appeared to him as innate qualities; he never suspected that they might be derived from sensation itself."[3] Condillac thus suggested that the enquiry regarding the nature and function of mind or soul should be conducted not as previously on the plane of metaphysical speculation, but as a physiological study; in other words, psychology must be regarded as a part of physiology. That was a very bold suggestion to make even in the iconoclastic Age of Reason. The English physician, David Hartley followed up .the pointer, and made the first attempt to explain psychological phenomena as processes of the physiological mechanism. Newton's opinion that the cause of sensation was vibration of ether added to the impetus of the enquiry.

Postulating that "man consists of two parts, the body and mind", Hartley tried to find the relation between them; his investigations led to the conclusion that mental phenomena were produced by the vibration of ether (pervading the nerve-pores) caused by the impact of external objects. Impinging on the senses, the latter cause vibrations of the infinitesimally small particles of the medullary substance which constitutes the brain, spinal marrow and the nerves. Hartley identified the medullary substance as "the immediate instrument of sensation". Sensations aije produced by its vibrations; ideas and actions are transformations of the sensations which are processes in the physiological mechanism. On the basis of this analysis, Hartley maintained: "If that species of motion we term vibration, can be shown by probable argument to attend upon all sensations, ideas and motions, then we are at liberty to make

**lbid.*

vibrations the exponent of sensations, ideas and motions,, however impossible it may be to discover in what way vibrations cause sensations and ideas, that is, though vibrations be of a corporeal, and sensations and ideas of a mental nature. It is sufficient for me that there is a certain connection of one kind or other between sensations of the soul and the motions excited in the medullary substance of the brain."[1]

The enquiry was continued by Erasmus Darwin, who defined idea as "contraction or motion or configuration of the fibres which constitute the immediate organs of sense, synonimous with sensual motion in contradiction to muscular motion."[5] He made the first attempt to clear away the confusion created by the sensationalist doctrine of images. "If our recollection or imagination be not a repetition of animal movements, I ask, in my turn, what is it? You tell me it consists of images or pictures of things. Where is this extensive canvas hung up—or where are the numerous receptacles in which these are deposited? Or to what els£-in the animal system have they any similitude? That pleasing picture of objects represented in miniature on the retina of the eyes seems to have given rise to this illusive oratory! It was forgot that this representation belongs rather to the laws of light than to those of life; and may with equal elegance be seen in the *camera obscura* as in the eye; and that the picture vanishes for ever when the object is withdrawn."[6]

This bold approach to the problem of cognition discarded the notion that there was some sort of a spiritual agency in man to receive impressions and transform them into sensations. The implication of Darwin's challenging

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[4] David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty and His Expectations.*

[5] *Laws of Organic Life.*

[6] *Ibid.*

argument is that ideas are produced in a long complicated physiological process, which is initiated in the mechanism of the nervous system by external objects impinging on the sense organs.

In Condillac, the sensationalist philosophy reached its high-water mark. But even then, it was not free from its basic defect, namely, the limited significance (of immediate-ness and directness) of the very term sensation. The result of the defect was the failure to take into account previously stored impressions (instincts) transmitted through heredity. The defect compelled Sensationalism to admit the existence of *a priori* properties or spiritual entities, contradicting its premises and making concession to the doctrine of innate ideas. Psychological approach to the problem of cognition enabled Cabanis, a pupil of Condillac, to cure the basic defect of Sensationalism and make of it a logically consistent and empirically verifiable scientific naturalism, which came to be known as the eighteenth century Materialism.

Having realised the basic necessity of ascertaining what was sensibility, Cabanis began his enquiry with the questions: "Does it always presuppose consciousness and distinct perception? And must we refer to some other property of the living body all those unperceived impressions and movements in which volition has no part?" The enquiry led Cabanis to the conclusion that, in addition to direct and immediate sensations, "connate instincts" must be recognised as the source of mental phenomena. They .are "images or ideas" which are formed in the brain not immediately and directly by the impressions to which they react. They are anterior, having been stored up in the train-and other nerve-centres as the totality of the product of earlier experiences.[7] Thus, Cabanis abolished the invidi-

[7] Cabanis, *Rapport du Physique et du Morale de I'Homme.*

ous distinction between life and mind, showing that the latter is a function of the former.

"Subject to the action of external bodies, man finds in the impressions these bodies make on his organs, at once hi& knowledge and the cause of his continued existence; for, to live is to feel; and in that admirable chain of phenomena, which constitutes his existence, every one depends upon the development of some faculty, every faculty by its very development satisfies some one, and the faculties grow by exercise as the wants extend with the faculty of satisfying them. By the continual action of external bodies on the senses of man, results the most remarkable part of his existence."[8] That is to say, intelligence and desire, reason and will are manifestations of the self-same vital force.

In the tradition of the Renaissance, Descartes had insisted upon the independence of mind. Reason as a property of the mind thus remained isolated from life, on the other side of the unbridgeable gulf of psycho-physical parallelism. Metaphysical rationalism was a mere variation of teleology. Cartesian rationalism vigorously combatted all suggestions, which denied a super-material character to intelligence and reason, and identified the mental with the vital. "To doubt this truth (independence of mind) was to overthrow all morality, to reduce man to the level of the brute, to make religion a mockery. To doubt this truth was, in fact, *to* incur the most incriminating of charges—Materialism."[9]

By merging psychology into physiology, Cabanis successfully overthrew the authority of Descartes, and brought reason down to the earth as a function of higher biological organisms. Scientific naturalism of the eighteenth century, therefore, also pleaded guilty to the charge of Materialism. It also mocked at religion, revealed it as based on supersti-

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[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Lewes, *History of Philosophy.*

tion. But it did not overthrow morality; on the contrary, it placed morality on a sounder foundation by giving man the conviction that he could find the sanction of morality in his own conscience—a part of his physical being. And de la Mettrie showed that man was a machine just like any other animal. Only, man was not reduced to the level of a brute, but his being and becoming were placed in the context of the physical nature, thus freeing him from the venerable prejudices of super-naturalism.

De la Mettrie was preceded by Robinet who, in his book on *Nature* attributed life to the smallest particles of matter: Even the constituents of inorganic nature bear within themselves, only without any self-consciousness, the principles of sensation. The two principles of matter—corporeal and spiritual—act upon each other.

Finally, de la Mettrie made the bold declaration that 'the entire world, including man, was a machine: the soul is material and matter soulful. The way the two—body and soul—grow and decay together, act upon each other, leaves no room for doubt about their essential similarity and interdependence. All organisms evolve out of one original germ; they grow by reacting upon the environment. Animals have intelligence, but plants have none; that is because, thanks to their ability to move about, animals can react upon the environments in a greater variety of ways, with the result that they feel more wants and develop the ability to satisfy them. Man has the highest intelligence, because he feels more wants than other animals, and has the greatest mobility. Beings without wants have no mind.[10]

The expounder of these sensational ideas was not an ignorant man; nor did he make merely dogmatic assertions. De la Mettrie was a medical man of rich experience and vast learning. He evolved his ideas over a period of a quarter of a century. While under a violent attack of fever, he

[10] *L'Homme Machine.*

experienced that quickened circulation of the blood influenced thought. Having carried initial experiments on himself, he observed the phenomena in a large number of cases in hospitals. From those experiments and observations, he reached the conclusion that thought was nothing but a consequence of the organisation of the mechanism of the human body. The result of his initial enquiry was set forth in the earlier work, *Natural History of Soul.*

The beginning is cautious. It is shown that no philosopher, from Aristotle to Malebranche, has been able to explain the nature of the soul; disembodied soul is like matter without form; it cannot be conceived. Therefore, the enquiry about the nature of the soul must begin with the study of the body. The study led to the conclusion that man is a machine. The conclusion was backed up by a great wealth of facts, collected from the observation of the sick and convalescent. Deprecating the attempts of great philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz and others, to form an *a priori* idea of man, de la Mettrie declared that "only *a posteriori,* starting from experience and from the study of the bodily organs, can we attain, if not a certainty, at least a high degree of probability."

So, there was no dogmatism even in the *enfant terrible* of eighteenth century Materialism. There is nothing outside nature. That was the basic proposition. The imperfection of the knowledge of nature was freely admitted; but the belief in its unlimitedness was unbounded. The potentiality of human intelligence was inexhaustible; the corollary to that belief was that the measure of man's creativeness was incalculable. The motto of the eighteenth century was: "Let human reason be free, and in a few generations it will build Utopia" (Diderot). The Age of Reason thus gave birth to Romanticism: Reason was to be reinforced by "creative imagination".

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The eighteenth century was the Age of Reason in the sense that demand for the application of reason to the affairs of this mortal world was the most outstanding feature of the intellectual life of the time. Rationalism came down from the rarefied atmosphere of metaphysical speculation, and claimed to be the criterion of political and social judgment.

Previously, the struggle for human freedom had been conducted largely in the realm of ideas. That was a necessary stage of the history of humanity. Anachronistic social relations and political institutions stood on the way of human progress; but they could not be removed unless their ideological foundation was undermined. They derived their moral sanction from a super-human, super-natural, divine authority, which was generally accepted. Man's mind had to be freed before he could feel the urge for freedom on this

earth; spiritual freedom was the condition for man's being conscious of his capacity to reshape the world so as to promote the welfare and happiness of the race. The venerable belief in Providence had to be shaken before man could have faith in himself as the maker of his own destiny. In brief, a philosophical revolution created the atmosphere for great political and social changes brought about by human will and human efforts. The success in the revolt against God emboldened man to rise against kings who claimed to rule with divine right.

Locke was the first political philosopher. He was the first to demand secularisation of politics, not only in theory, but also in practice. He pointed out that the oppressiveness of the mediaeval social order was due to the confusion of religion and politics, making the one an instrument of the other, reciprocally. On the one hand, political power was used for the suppression of spiritual freedom; and, on the other, religion provided authority to despotic rulers and oppressive political institutions.

England was the scene of the first political revolution, of modern times. But during the Cromwellian period, religious and political issues were confused. The Puritans did not demand secularisation of politics; they were religious fanatics themselves. The Puritan revolution, indeed,, belonged to the age of religious wars, which had preceded the dawn of the Age of Reason. Locke seized upon and elaborated the ideas of toleration and civil liberty which grew out of the experience of the revolution in England. Those liberating ideas were enthusiastically hailed in France where a philosophical revolution had created an explosive atmosphere admirably suitable for a dramatic unfoldment of their dynamics.

"A leading feature of the movement of thought so inaugurated in France was its active concern for the regeneration of society. The niceties of metaphysical speculation did not appeal to the clear practical mind of Voltaire or, indeed, to any of the French thinkers of the Voltairean age. The metaphysics of Locke and his French disciple Condillac was a sufficient instrument for their purpose, which was to apply the human reason coolly and dispassionately, without theological predilections and restraints, to the removal of the intellectual detritus of the Middle-Ages and to the amendment of man's state."[11]

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Historical research had revealed the origin of society as a creation of man, and civilisation as an evolutionary process. The new understanding of the past lighted up the future. The conditions of life could be changed, and a new world of freedom, happiness and harmony created by the efforts of man. Only a general will to bring about the desired changes must be kindled. For that purpose, the popular

[11]H. A. L. Fisher, *The History of Europe.*

mind must be freed from prejudices and superstitions-fostered by religion. A passionate appeal to reason was the method; but it presupposed the conviction that reason is not a metaphysical category, but a human attribute; that man is essentially a rational being. The conviction was created by the new philosophy of scientific naturalism as well as by the new understanding of past history. Abiding faith in the creativeness of man, and a fervent belief in the possibility of social progress were the key-notes of the intellectual life of the eighteenth century. "Energetic faith in the possibilities of social progress has been first reached through the philosophy of sensation and experience."[12]

Religion gave a meaning to man's life; there was a goal to attain, be it the blissful life in heaven or the mystic dream of salvation. The new philosophy destroyed the faith in a goal of life; it visualised life as a continuous process, of becoming. Was the idea of progress consistent with a non-teleological view of life? Progress means advance in a certain direction, and the measure of the advance is the approximation to the journey's end. If life has no goal, if it is not a journey towards a definite end, how could one speak of progress? This argument my sound plausible, if not quite convincing, and with it, sceptics doubted the possibility of progress and even ridiculed the very idea. But there is another test for the idea of progress; it is the distance between the, primitive and the civilised. The fact that mankind has been moving further and further away from the primitive state, and the movement has been evolutionary, warrants the belief in the possibility of future progress. And when it is further known that in the past it has not been a teleological process, but a result of human efforts, the optimistic view of the future finds an empirical justification, and the possibility or the logical expectation of

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[12] John Morley, *Life of Diderot.*

progress increases in proportion to the will for it. The picture of a possible future is conceived in imagination. "Creative imagination" came to be the antidote of rationalist teleology.

The idea of progress was conceived by the intellectual leaders of the eighteenth century France in this sense. The fatalist mood of the classical rationalism, the cult of a secular *teleos,* was entirely incompatible with this temperament and conviction. Convinced by the still inadequate scientific knowledge of their time, that man being a part of nature, human will was a manifestation of the sovereign laws of nature, they were full of the burning faith that, given the chance, man could be the maker of his destiny. The chance comes neither in the fulness of time as a matter of natural justice nor as a gift of God. It is to be conquered by man; but he is debarred from doing so by superstitions and prejudices born of the traditional religious mode of thought, as well as by the oppressive use of secular power. Therefore, the intellectual leaders of the eighteenth century felt the need for a crusade in the first place against religion; they believed that, freed from superstitions and prejudices fostered by religion, man would regain confidence in themselves and take up the task shaping the future according to enlightened self-interest. Guided by reason, illuminated by creative imagination, spiritually free men would alter the conditions of the world for the better. That is how the belief in social progress manifested itself in the eighteenth century. That view of life came to be known as Romanticism, which certainly did not rule out the use of reason in the guidance of human affairs.

Evidently, a new philosophy was required to usher in the Age of Man. It must be a philosophy concerned primarily with human life, which would set human spirit free —a philosophy which would explain all the phenomena of nature and all the experiences of human life without postu-

lating a Providence or assuming any transcendental divine intervention. Such a view of nature and human life could not claim absolute certainty without the absurd pretention of omniscience—of possessing perfect and absolute knowledge of all the aspects of existence. It must necessarily be rested on hypotheses such as were logically permissible and appeared plausible in the light of the scientific knowledge of the time.

Scepticism is not a stable position; it is a negative attitude which is bound to paralyse action. Scepticism is the mental attitude of a period of transition—from the rejection of antiquated ideas and false ideals to new convictions. Therefore, it cannot have a permanent place in a philosophy with a social purpose. It is not dogmatic to have a conviction as long as absolute certainty is not claimed. Dogmatism or finality has no place in a philosophy which disowns transcendental sanction, and seeks it only in a generalisation of the ever increasing body of positive knowledge acquired in the various fields of scientific investigation. The intellectual life of the eighteenth century, specially of France, was guided by such a philosophy with a social purpose.[13]

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[13] It (18th century French philosophy) was a much more radical, aggressive and revolutionary philosophy than the species of English philosophy to which it was most allied, and of which it was, in a sense, the development. It was in particular more decided and sweeping in its rejection of authority, recognising none save diat of reason, and excepting nothing from the criticism of reason. Ancient tradition, common consent, faith of the Church, scriptures, were held to be worthless except in so far as conformed to, and vouched for by, reason. Specially Christian doctrines were treated by all the adherents of the new philosophy as absurd and pernicious superstitions; and although the principles of theism were accepted by a class of them as rationally warranted, a class not less numerous assailed all religious beliefs as delusion. The new philosophy was eminently rationalistic; it was not, however, calmly and temperately, but keenly and passionately, so. The philosophy was empirical as well as rationalistic, and largely also materialistic. Its eyes were not turned inwards or upwards, but they were keenly observant of 'the surrounding physical and social phenomena. In France, during the eighteenth century, a remarkable progress was made in mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, natural history,

At the dawn of the Age of Reason, scepticism was the prevalent philosophy in France. The pious Christian Charron shared with Montaigne the honour of ushering in that period of transition. While Pascal's scepticism led him back to an "honest but narrow and fanatical" reverence for faith demonstrating the instability of a purely negative mood, La Mothe le Vayer, with the fundamentalist believer's distrust for theology, acted as an auxiliary to Bayle. Through his intermediary, scepticism penetrated the court of the Catholic Sun King, and his writings helped the cause of the Enlightenment generally. The tremendous influence of Bayle's scepticism is well known. Diderot himself began his. struggle against the Church also under, the standard of scepticism, and even de la Mettrie called himself a Pyrrhonist, walking in the footsteps of "the first Frenchman who ventured to think", namely, Montaigne. Voltaire, of course, never abandoned the sceptic pose, because he stood with one foot in the camp of classicism, and temperamentally preferred the Dyonisian role to that of the Evangelist.

"With the death of Louis XIV came that remarkable turning point in modern history which was as important for the philosophic mode of thought of the educated, as for the social and political fortunes of the nations: The intellectual intercourse between England and France which developed so suddenly and in such intensity. ..... In the sphere of politics, the French took from England the idea of civil freedom and of the rights of the individual; but these ideas.

geography and medicine; and the causes of their progress were to a considerable extent the same to which were due the prevalence of the philosophy of the epoch. There were many who found in Holbach's conclusions only their own opinions, and firmly believed dial science showed that there could be no God, soul or immortality. It was militant, aggressive, ethically, politically and religiously. It aimed not only at displacing, but replacing, the powers which had hitherto ruled the world. Its chief strength was drawn from its positive ethical and political convictions; from its faith in justice, toleration, liberty, fraternity, the sovereignty of the people, the Rights of Man." (Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History).*

were combined with the democratic tendency which awoke in France with irresistible strength. Similarly, in the sphere of speculation, English Materialism combined with French scepticism, and the product of this combination was the radical rejection of Christianity and the Church which in England since Newton and Boyle had made such excellent terms with the mechanical conception of nature. Singular and yet quite capable of explanation is it that the philosophy of Newton should in France be made to further atheism, while it had been introduced into France with the certificate that it was less injurious to faith than Cartesianism!"[14]

Eighteenth century France was crowded with deists, sceptics, atheists and materialists. But there was one passion common to all of them; they were all anti-clericals, determined to free political life from the domination of religious orthodoxy and the influence of the Church. The light of knowledge should be taken to the people at large, if the power of superstition and tradition was to be broken. With that purpose, was the famous Encyclopedia published. There was no open attack on the Church or faith; nor was atheism preached openly. "Tolerance, suspension of judgment, the application of reason to all the facts of human life were joined with the fullest explanation of natural phenomena and the natural sciences that had yet been made."[15]

The Encyclopedists pleaded for religious toleration and freedom of thought, and proclaimed the democratic doctrine that the lot of the common man was the main concern of the government. Propagation of knowledge was their fundamental purpose; knowledge will give people the power to break their bondage. The underlying purpose of the publication was hinted in d'Alembert's *Discourse Preliminaire,* wherein "Superstition and Magic" were listed under the "heading" "The Science of God".

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[14]Lange, *History of Materialism,*

[15] Lynn Thorndike, *The Encyclopedia and History of Science.*

The government, however, made no mistake about the danger of the covert assault upon its secular power and the divine sanction thereof. On the publication of two volumes, the Encyclopedia was suppressed as "injurious to the King's authority and religion". But the *philosophes* – Hevetius, de la Mettrie, d'Alembert, Maupertuis, Lagrange, Condillac, Condorcet, Buffon, de Tracy, Cabanis, Turgot, Grimm, Holbach, Diderot, Voltaire—a gallaxy of intellectual giants unparallelled since the golden age of Pericles, represented the spirit of the time. Their effort could not be easily suppressed; it found access everywhere, penetrated even the Court of Versailles. Thanks to the good offices of Madame Pompadour, and the savant Malesherbes, then Director-General of the National Library, the government allowed resumption of "a work honourable to the nation". But the Church and other powerful forces of reaction gained the upperhand; the official ban was reimposed, and organised rowdyism made printing impossible. Finally, Diderot obtained private permission to proceed with the printing on condition that no volume would be published before the whole work was completed. The books, however, found wide circulation in the provinces of France as well as in countries abroad. In Paris, they were read secretly, and Madame Pompadour managed to have them presented at a royal dinner party.

"No Encyclopedia perhaps has been of such political importance, or has occupied so conspicuous a place in the civil and literary history of its century."[18] "Theistic but heretical, it was opposed to the Church, then all-powerful in France; and it treated dogmas historically."[17] The Encyclopedia has been described as "a war machine"; ns it progressed, its attacks, on the Church and still more on

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[16] *Encyclopedia Eritannica,* 13th Ed.

[17] Rosenkranz, *Life and Worths of Diderot.*

the despotic political regime as well as on Christianity itself, became bolder and more undisguised.

The great popularity and far-reaching influence of the Encyclopedia were the measure of the Enlightenment. The light of the new philosophy of human freedom, secular as well as spiritual, flashed over Europe like the lightning before the thunder—of the coming revolution. Napoleon appreciated the full value of the Enlightenment when he said: "The Bourbons might have preserved themselves if they had controlled writing materials. The advent of the cannon killed the feudal system; ink will kill the modern social organisation." The shrewd Corsican had the premonition that his new Empire might follow the *ancien regime* of the Bourbons. And he had reason to be anxious. Because, "books rule the world. Nothing enfranchises like education. When once a nation begins to think, it is impossible to stop it."[18]

Diderot spoke for the entire fraternity of the *Philosofhes,* when in 1771 he wrote in a letter to a friend: "The first attack against religion has been violent and unmeasured. Once that men have in some manner assaulted the barriers of religion, they cannot be stopped. After they have turned their menacing looks against the sovereigns of the skies, they will next direct them against the sovereigns of the earth. The cable which depressed humanity is of two strands: the one cannot give way without the other soon snapping."

Yet, Diderot himself had travelled a long way before he reached that point. He had opposed Materialism, even as expressed cautiously in de la Mettrie's earlier book, *Natural History of the Soul.* At that time, he shared the pious romanticism of Shaftsbury who described Christianity as "a cheerful and good-tempered religion", while declaring

[18] Tallentyre, *Voltaire.*

that "there lies in every human breast natural germ of enthusiasm for virtue". Shaftsbury's exuberant optimism, hailed by the heralds of the revolution in France, marked a clear departure from the classical rationalism of his teacher, Locke, who distrusted enthusiasm as the source of extravagance and self-exaltation, as a noxious product of the over-heated brain and as utterly opposed to all rational thought.[19] Social purpose, however, drove Diderot to assume the leadership of the crusade against God and religion; and raising his voice against the intolerance, tyranny and brutality of the established order, he exclaimed: "What wrongs have these unhappy souls committed? Who has condemned them to these torments? The God whom they have offended. Who is then this God? A God of infinite goodness? What! Can a God of infinite goodness find any pleasure in bathing himself in tears? These are people of whom we must not say that they fear God, but that they are frightened of him. Considering the picture that is drawn for us of the Supreme Being, of his readiness to anger, of the fury of his vengeance, of the comparatively great number of those whom he allows to perish, as compared with the few to whom he is pleased to stretch forth a saving hand, the most righteous soul must be tempted to wish that he did not exist."[20]

Enraged by the callous atmosphere in which cruel injustice was committed, the calculating Voltaire also finally abandoned the "polite persiflage of agnosticism", and joined the crusade against God and religion with the thundering motto, *Ecrasez l'Infame* (Crush the Infamy). The cool critic and hardened cynic gave way to a passionately partisan outburst of righteous indignation. "This is not a time for jesting; wit does not harmonise with massacres. Is this the country of philosophy and pleasure? It is rather the

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[19] *Treatise on Human Understanding. Chapter,* "On Enthusiasm."

[20] Rosenkranz, *Life and Works of Diderot.*

country of the massacre of St. Bartholomew..... Come, brave Diderot, intrepid d'Alembert, ally yourselves, overwhelm the fanatics and the knaves, destroy the insipid declamations, the miserable sophistries, the lying history, the absurdities without number; do not let those who have sense be subjected to those who have none, and the generation which is being iorn will owe to us its reason and liberty."[21] .

Rejecting the offer of a Cardinal's hat, an outraged old man threw all his caution and calculations to the winds and wrote the formidable *Treatise on Toleration;* it was quickly followed up by a vast mass of anti-clerical and anti-religious literature which flew in all directions like a veritable fusillade from the "war machine" charging ahead at a top speed. Declaring that "big books are out of fashion", enraged Voltaire took to pamphleteering with the purpose of popularising the new philosophy, and he was fully successful as Napoleon testified subsequently. His "little soldiers" were sold 'by hundreds of thousands when literacy was very limited. The light reached practically every man and woman who could read.

For the greater part of his long life, Voltaire was rather an ecclectic, an intellectual acrobat, than a passionate prophet, a- man with a message. Yet, with Rousseau, he has been held responsible for the revolution.[22] The two certainly personified respectively the two trends of thought which together led France to the revolution—rationalism and romanticism. Yet, Voltaire was not a classicist, which he often pretended to be. His was the complex personality of a highly civilised man in contrast to the primitiveness of Rousseau. Erotic and neurotic, the latter was also a complicated type, emotionally; intellectually, Rousseau was naive—the archetype of romantic revolutionary, for whom

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[21] Voltaire's Correspondence.

[22] "Those two men have destroyed France." (Louis XVI).

thoughtless, fanatical, irrational passions were the only human virtue. Voltaire, on the contrary, with all his cynicism and frigidity, was a staurich believer in man's role in history.

"His Sacred Majesty, Chance, decides everything. True prayer lies not in asking for a violation of natural law, but in the acceptance of natural law as the unchangeable will of God."[23]

"The Chancellor Bacon had shown the road which science might follow. But then Descartes appeared and did just the contrary of what he should have done: Instead of studying nature, he wished to divine her. This best of mathematicians made only romances in philosophy. It is given to us to calculate, to weigh, to measure, to observe; this is natural philosophy; almost all the rest is chimera."[24]

When Voltaire's remains were taken, from the original modest place of burial, to the Pantheon, by order of the Revolutionary National Assembly, thirteen years after his death, the *cortege* bore the inscription: "He gave the human mind a great impetus; he prepared us for freedom."

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However, Denis Diderot, editor of the great Encyclopedia, was the dynamo of the Enlightenment—the most representative figure of the "Voltairean Age", and Holbach's *System of Nature* the fullest expression of its spirit. -Published in 1770, the *System of Nature* or *The Laws of the Physical and Moral Worlds* in no time came to be known as the "Bible of Materialism". In it were set forth all the logical consequences of the scientific knowledge disseminated through the Encyclopedia. What was implicit in the indifferently constructed and hurriedly composed earlier work, was made explicit and co-ordinated in a systematic

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[23] Voltaire's Correspondence.

[24] Pellissier, *Voltaire, Philosophe.*

statement of scientific naturalism. Though the authorship of the book is attributed to Holbach, who was certainly not a dummy, Diderot was its heart and soul. It maintained that the Universe was nothing but matter in spontaneous movement; that soul dies with the body; that happiness is the end of mankind; that it would be useless and unjust to insist upon a man's being virtuous if he could not be so without being unhappy; that the restraints of religion were to be replaced by education to develop enlightened self-interest; that the object of the study of science was to bring human desires into line with their natural surroundings. A whole philosophy was expounded in detail to justify a direct attack upon the established political regime and its social basis. It was a philosophy which heralded the revolution.

The object of the book is stated clearly in the preface. "Man is unhappy merely because he misunderstands nature. His mind is so infected by prejudices that one must almost believe him to be for ever doomed to error; the chains of illusion in which he is so entangled from childhood have so grown upon him that he can only with the utmost trouble be again set free from them. Unhappily, he struggles to rise above the visible world, and painful experiences constantly remind him of the futility of his attempts. Man disdained the study of nature to pursue after phantoms, that, like will-o'-the-wisps, dazzled him and drew him from the plain path of truth, away from which he cannot attain happiness. It is therefore time to speak in nature remedies against the evils into which fanaticism has plunged us."

To secure the happiness of mankind being the purpose of philosophy, "the right of people to revolt in desperate circumstances" was declared as an axiomatic truth. There-'fore, revolution must be regarded as a natural and necessary event. "As government only derives its powers from society, and is established only for its good, it is evident that society may revoke this power when its interests demand, may

change the form of government, extend or limit the power intrusted to its leaders, over whom it retains supreme authority, by the immutable law of nature that subordinates the part to the whole."

The criticism of the traditional notion of public morality was very drastic; nevertheless, it was so true that it is-equally valid even in our time. "We only see so many crimes on earth because everything conspires to make mea criminal and vicious. Their religions, their governments,, their education, the examples before their eyes, all drive them irresistibly to evil;' in vain then does morality preaca virtue which would only be a painful sacrifice of happines; in societies where vice and crime are perpetually crowned,, honoured and rewarded, and where the most frightful disorders are only punished in those who are too weak to have-the right to commit them with impunity. Society chastises in the small the excesses that it respects in the great, and often is unjust enough to condemn to death those whom the prejudices that it maintains have rendered criminal."

Towards the end, the book rises to great heights of rhetoric without leaving the solid foundation of reason. Whoever might have written the rest, in its conclusion the inspired and inspiring voice of Diderot is unmistakable. The fruits of philosophical enquiry will sooner or later benefit all, just as is already the case with the results of the natural sciences. The new ideas will encounter violent opposition; but men will gradually learn from experience. We must not limit our views to the present; the new philosophy is valid also for the future of all mankind. The last chapter is reminiscent of the immortal poem of Lucretius. There, Nature is discoursing. She invites mankind to obey her laws, to enjoy the happiness which is their birthright, to cultivate virtue and disdain vice, but not to hate the vicious who are to be pitied for their misfortune. Then, the author speaks again as it were for himself:

Nature has her apostles who are tirelessly engaged in promoting the happiness of man; those of them who may not succeed will have the satisfaction of having ventured to make the attempt. Finally, Nature and her daughters, Virtue, Reason and Truth, are invoked as the only deities to be adored and worshipped.

Diderot was the personification of the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment, because in him were harmonised the apparently conflicting outlooks of the two men who between themselves are said to have discredited the old order and invoked the forces of the new, namely, the rationalist Voltaire and the romanticist Rousseau. The evolution of the spirit of the age can be traced in the biography of Diderot.

"The man of fire and genius, who is so often called the head and leader of the Materialists, not only needed a long course of development before he reached what can be properly called a materialistic standpoint, but even to the last moment remained in a state of ferment which never allowed him to perfect and elucidate his views. The noble nature which comprised in itself all the virtues and all the faults of the Idealist, specially, zeal for human welfare, self-sacrificing friendship, and unfaltering faith in the good, the beautiful, the true, and in the perfectibility of the world, was driven by the tendency of the times and against his will towards Materialism."[25]

It is not true that Diderot embraced Materialism against his will. Materialism, a philosophy of life based on scientific knowledge, was the spirit of the time, which produced Diderot as its most representative spokesman. The doubt about Diderot's materialist conviction results from the fact that he did not fill the role cast for the Materialist by ignorance and prejudice. A Materialist is supposed to be morally

[25] Lange, *History of Materialism*.

perverse, aesthetically insensitive, culturally coarse and generally selfish. A scientific naturalist, philosophically, and a rationalist to the core, conceiving reason as a human faculty, Diderot nevertheless was an archetype of Shaftsbury's "Moralists"—an enthusiastic believer in "the everlasting beauty which runs through the whole world and combines all apparent dissonances into a deep, full-toned, harmony."

In other words, in Diderot, reason and romanticism combined to produce a perfected human philosophy, and inspire a revolutionary intellectual and social movement which swept the whole of Europe. Therefore, his most competent and impartial biographer has aptly compared Diderot with Socrates. Like the ancient Sage of Athens, the great intellectual leader of the eighteenth century was the most representative figure of a period of transition, and as such reflected all the significant currents and cross-currents of thought and emotion; and they found a harmony in Diderot's personality. "In him, the process of the times from the Regency to the Revolution (the whole Age of Reason) fulfilled itself in all the phases of its development. There was in Diderot, as in Socrates, something demonic. He was then only completely himself when, like Socrates, he had raised himself up to the ideas of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. Only in this ecstasy did he become the real Diderot whose enraptured eloquence, like that of Socrates, carried every listener away."[26]

In the seventeenth century, when modern philosophy was born, intellectual creativeness was highly individualised. Complete systems were built by individual philosophers. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was the creation of a fraternity of philosophers. Both the *Encyclopedia* and *The System of Nature* were results of collective intellectual efforts. The eighteenth century was swept by the

[26] Rosenkranz, *Life and Worlds of Diderot.*

springtide of an unprecedented exuberance of the human spirit. Intellect, talent, genius, sensibility, imagination ran riot. But there was an underlying unity of purpose: To humanise and democratise philosophy, so that it could be the instrument to promote the cause of freedom, progress and happiness.

"It lay in the nature of that seething time that all the various revolutionary tendencies reacted upon each other. If Diderot enthusiastically eulogised morality, the thought of attacking the very basis of morality might be awakened in another mind, whilst in both minds there prevailed the same hatred of priestly morality and of the humiliation of mankind by the despotism of the clergy. Voltaire might arouse atheists with an apology for the existence of God, because he was above all things concerned to deprive the Church of the monopoly of the theistic doctrine which it had so misused and distorted. In this unceasing torrent of assault upon all authority, the tone became undoubtedly more and more radical."[27]

Materialism, as it crystallised out of this background of intellectual ferment, emotional exuberance, moral indignation, political disaffection, economic chaos and social discontent, was not a dogmatic system rationally constructed by one single philosopher. It was neither a purely rationalist system of thought denying human will and human endeavour any significance in its secular teleology; nor was it a dogmatic doctrine proclaiming the fictitious sovereignty and impotent free will of the atomised individual. Created by man, on the basis of collective human experience, Materialism, as it was elaborated by Diderot and his fellow-*philosophes,* was a human philosophy which took all the aspects of numan existence into consideration, and attached equal importance to every manifestation of human spirit and

[27] Lange. *History of Materialism.*

every form of man's creativeness. The Renaissance found its culmination in the Enlightenment.

"Most of the philosophers of the French Revolution combined science with beliefs associated with Rousseau, Helvetius and Condorcet may be regarded as typical in their combination of rationalism and enthusiasm."[28] De la Mettrie formulated the metaphysics of Materialism; Helvetius provided the ethics, and his ethical system, deduced from the materialist metaphysics of de la Mettrie, was at the same time deeply coloured by romanticism. An enthusiastic believer in man's essential rationality as well as goodness,. Helvetius held that only a perfect education was needed to make man perfect. "Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education." Helvetius profoundly influenced the moral philosophy of the nineteenth century. "What Bacon was to the physical world, Helvetius was to the moral. The moral world has, therefore, had its Bacon, but its Newton is still to come." [9] The pious founder of utilitarian ethics perhaps believed himself to be the Newton of the moral world. His equally pious colleague, James Mill, recommended the Materialist Helvetius to be the guide of his son's education, and the latter became the prophet of philosophical Radicalism.

Condorcet was the youngest member of the fraternity of *philosophes.* He was in the prime of life when the revolution broke out; and he participated in it, only to be one of its innumerable innocent victims. Though a mathematician, the emotional strand of the philosophy of revolution predominated in him. But at the critical moment, rationalism prevailed, and refusal to be swept away by the irrational revolutionary enthusiasm cost him his life. His faith in the liberating mission of the revolution, however, never flagged, not even when he was martyred by the frenzy of the callous.

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[28] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy.*

[29] Bentham.

brutality of its fanatical exuberance. On the contrary, he wrote his main philosophical treatise while haunted by the ferocious spectre of the guillotine, in an atmosphere of confusion and violence, created by the fanatical devotees of the blood-thirsty cult of revolution. In the critical days of 1791, Condorcet was the first to demand publicly that the monarchy should be replaced by a republic. Thus, he broke away from the tradition of classicist rationalism of the Girondists. Yet, he did not join the Jacobins. Elected to the Convention from five constituencies, Condorcet was among those who found the King guilty of conspiring against liberty, but he would not vote for his death. The independence of advocating that the severity of justice might be softened with compassion brought him under the suspicion of Jacobin intolerance; he was accused of conspiracy against the Republic and declared an outlaw. With the help of friends, he managed to escape the guillotine and lived in bidding for the rest of his life—a little more than a year. During that time, he wrote *L'Equtsse d'nn Tableau Htstonque des Progres de I'Esprit Humain* (The Outlines of a Picture of the History of the Progress of Human Spirit). It was an eloquent exposition of the evolutionary view of history and of the philosophy of revolution deduced from it.

All the evils of life had resulted from a conspiracy of priests and princes, who created unjust laws and oppressive institutions to rob the freedom of their fellow-men. But mankind was bound to vanquish its enemies and liberate itself from all bondage. Continuous progress in the past proves human perfectibility, which promises endless progress in the future. Starting from the lowest stage of barbarism, with no superiority over other animals except that of the structure of his body, man advances uninterruptedly in the path of enlightenment, virtue and happiness.

That is a brief statement of the premises on which Condorcet built his theory of history in ten stages. The

ninth began with the great intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century and culminated in the gigantic political and social upheaval of 1789. The tenth epoch was still to come. Its nature could be inferred from the general laws which regulated the past. The three main tendencies manifested in the entire history of the past will also be the characteristic features of the future. They are: (1) Destruction of inequality between nations; (2) Disappearance of inequality between classes; and (3) Improvement of individuals resulting from the indefinite perfectibility of human nature, intellectually, morally and physically.

That is the Utopia of rationalism; but the future depicted by Condorcet's optimism is really not a dreamland. There will he no absolute equality; it will be an equality of rights and liberties. Equally free, men and nations will be equal: they are tending towards equality, because all are moving towards freedom. Condorcet's historicism was not a secular teleology; nor was his rationalism metaphysical. He knew that human progress was conditioned by the given circumstances of existence, political as well as social. But he held that progress could not be checked for ever, although it might be delayed or retarded. There is no limit to the advancement of knowledge and virtue; indefiniteness of progress and human perfectibility result from the power of unbounded knowledge and moral excellence. Therefore, Condorcet, like Helvetius, attached great importance to popular education, which would create conditions for sure progress. That was the cardinal principle of the great intellectual revolution, which was therefore called the Enlightenment.

The torch of truth held high by the philosophers of the eighteenth century, however, was not extinguished. It blazed a luminous trail into the darkness of an unknown future, which is still to be travelled by mankind. The Enlightenment remains a human heritage, itself the noblest creation of man's genius. Voltaire eulogised Reason because

Truth was her daughter. He distrusted enthusiasm and was sceptical of Utopias. Yet, he was not quite immune from the contagion of the general spirit of the time. When Turgot came to power, he exclaimed: "We are in the Golden Age up to our neck." Perhaps that was veiled sarcasm of the cynic. But presently he was more explicit.

"Everything appears to be throwing broadcast the seed of revolution, which must some day inevitably come. Light extends so from neighbour to neighbour, that there will be a splendid outburst, and then there will be a rare commotion!"

That also might have been an outburst of subtle scepticism; but it was prophetic nonetheless. Truth after all is the daughter of Reason, and Voltaire was a rationalist.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT REVOLUTION-I

THE closing decade of the eighteenth century was marked by events which dealt such a smashing blow to the social order and political institutions of Europe that those time-honoured but dilapidated structures crumbled during the following age of revolution. The events took place in France, but they had a repercussion throughout Europe. France was the focal point of a European, indeed a worldwide, movement. It was the eruption of a volcano of human will and human energy which had been seething for centuries. Worn-out monuments of mediaeval barbarism were buried under the fiery excrescence of the eruption, which rocked the entire continent. An unrestrained outburst of passion and a riotous display of violent emotions seemed to throw rationality also in the scrap-heap of discarded ideas and discredited ideals. The Age of Reason appeared to end in an orgy of intolerance and irrationalism; at the same time, revolutionary enthusiasm for the classical tradition of the pre-Christian pagan antiquity made a carricature of Reason.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man was followed by the reign of terror which gave birth to the saying that revolution consumes her own children. It seemed that, given the chance of making history, man could only mar it. Was it necessary for the revolution to be so very violent and Wood-thirsty? Numerous books have been written to condemn the callous extravagances of men who professed to pursue the sublime ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; to point out that liberty was the price demanded for a fictitious equality; and that revolutionaries cutting each others' throats made a mockery of the ideal of fraternity.

Alas! All that is only too true. Nevertheless, a radical readjustment of social relations and complete overhaul of political institutions were the crying needs of the time. Not even the severest critic of the revolution denies that the old regime was altogether untenable. They only maintain that its substitution by a new order might have taken place gradually and peacefully. It is idle to speculate about the alternative possibilities of past history. The purpose of historical research is to understand why events moved as they did.

The fundamental issue of the Great European Revolution was the sanction for political authority; the doctrine of popular sovereignty was opposed to the dogma of the divine right of kings. The Great Revolution was a sequel to the Renaissance—the revolt of man against God. As the final act of a great drama unfolding over several centuries, it was bound to be a stirring and spectacular demonstration of the pathos of human will, human energy and human passion. In such climacterics of the drama of history, actors are liable to lose balance. That is why revolutions tend to be violent; and that was the case with the French Revolution. Deplorable as some of its features certainly were, no dispassionate historian can justify the conditions which made it almost inevitable. "The revolution was inevitable and indispensable. It was the explosion and revenge of the noblest feeling of humanity—I mean, energy."[1] That is the verdict of a distinguished historian who is beyond the suspicion of partiality or dogmatism.

The religious wars of the sixteenth century and the Thirty Years' War having disintegrated the Holy Roman Empire and also weakened the power of Spain, by the middle of the seventeenth century France held the proud position ,of the paramount State of Europe. She attained that position very largely thanks to the astuteness of

[1] Louis Madelin, *The French Revolution.*

Richelieu who took full advantage of the Thirty Years War i to increase the military power of France. The Catholic con-S science of the Cardinal did not prevent him from helping 'the Protestant Princes of Germany against Rome. Finally, France reached the zenith of her glory and grandeur during the long reign of Louis XIV, who therefore was hailed as the "Grand Monarch", the "Sun King". Not only was France the paramount political and military power; she also became the leader of European civilisation and culture. The age of Louis XIV was the age of Pascal, Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Bossuet, Fenelon, La Fontaine, to mention only a few at random. "The age of Louis XIV occupies in the history of France a place analogous to that of the age o£v Pericles in the history of Greece, and Augustus in the history of Rome."[2] It was the apotheosis of absolute monarchy. The magnificent structure of power, glory and apparent prosperity was reared upon an inequitable and oppressive social system. The nobility and the Church, which .between themselves owned practically all the land, were exempt from taxation. The entire burden fell on the peasantry. The result of that inequitable system of taxation was that public finance, even under conditions of apparent prosperity was threatened with bankruptcy. Great financial experts and administrators like Colbert, Necker and Turgot were called upon to tackle the problem. They planned reforms, which however could not be carried through within the framework of the established social relations. "If the policy initiated by Richelieu may be credited with leading to the triumphs of the age of Louis XIV, it must equally be held to have contributed to bring about the disasters of the revolution."[3]

The policy initiated by Richelieu and perfected by Louis

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[2] Robert Flint, *The History of the Philosophy* of *History.*

[3] Ibid.

XIV was to curtail the powers of the feudal nobility without encroaching upon their privileges, and to extend royal patronage to the rising class of merchants and bankers. The civil administration was gradually manned by talented members of the new class in return for the patronage, the great banking houses lent money to the Court, so that the perennial threat of financial bankruptcy could be headed off. On the other hand, the feudal privileges of the nobility were left intact on condition that they would reside in the capital to add to the grandeur of the Court. The motive of the policy was to free the provincial administrative and fiscal machinery from the interference of local powers, so that it could be placed under the control of bourgeois officials appointed directly by the Court. The progressive significance of that Machiavellian policy, however, was counter-balanced by the fact that it made the parasitic nature of the wealthy upper classes more evident than ever. The latter, in their turn, were thoroughly demoralised by the idleness and frivolity of Court life. The result of the system was general corruption and demoralisation of the ruling class.

Nothing short of a revolution could put an end to that state of affairs. But the victims of tyranny, despotism, anarchy and economic exploitation did not feel that need. If it is true that those factors were the sole and direct cause of the revolution, that they drove the people to revolt against intolerable conditions of life, then the revolution should have taken place a century earlier, on the death of the Grand Monarch, at any rate. "The misery of the great mass of the people foreboded a terrible reckoning. When the old king died in 1715, a general sense of relief was felt throughout

France. But the monarchy itself was unshaken; its princi-

* "It was not necessary for the bourgeoisie to revolt; they were in power since the reign of Louis XIV." (Madelin, *The French Revolution.)*

ples had not even been assailed. The temper of the French, people was still the reverse of revolutionary or disloyal."[5]

Under the Orleans Regency, conditions grew worse. Inefficiency and corruption made the government an object of lidicuie. The Court sank to the lowest depth of demoralisation. On the whole, during the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the ruling power was thoroughly decayed and disintegrated; it could resist a popular onslaught even less successfully than at the end of the century. Tradition was its only defence, and that proved still to be effective. But as soon as the popular mind was freed from the paralysing grip of tradition, the objective need for a revolution dawned in the consciousness of the generality; the monarchy ceased to be sacrosanct. It collapsed practically without any resistance, and the decayed structure of the old order crumbled into ruins like the walls of Jericho.

The revolution presupposed a challenge to the king's authority; his divine right to rule must be contested before the people would dare revolt against his despotism. That precondition was created by the Enlightenment. A philosophy which denied the very existence of the Divinity, logically destroyed the traditional moral sanction of the monarchy. If divine right was a fiction, what was the sanction of the king's authority? That was the beginning of the end; the Enlightenment was the effective cause of the revolution;[6] and the ^origin of the philosophy of the Enlightenment could be traced to the intellectual Renaissance of the twelfth century, if one did not want to go back further into the long, long process of the spiritual growth of man. The eighteenth century Materialism was not the philosophy of the rising

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[5] Flint, *The History of the Philosophy of History.*

[6] "The revolution was the outcome of realities; but it cannot be denied that without the help of Enlightenment it could not have arisen."

(Madelin, *The French Revolution).*

Bourgeoisie, nor was the Enlightenment a bourgeois ideological movement.

"Every one of them (leaders of the revolution) bears the impress of the same philosophy—a purely destructive philosophy. The revolution, prepared and brought about by men of intellect and writers, was impregnated with the ideas that .had ruled the ' Republic of Letters' for fifty years: ideological dogmatism, classicism, cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, .anti-Charistianism, and a philosophism destructive of all authority. They stirred up men's minds and sowed a ferment from within."[7] Jacobins, Cordelieres, the Society of the Equals, no less than the Girondists, were all moved by ideas developed from the antiquity to the Enlightenment. Baboeuf's defence has been described as a summing up of the unrealised ideals of the Enlightenment and a vindication of their necessity. On that occasion, he said: "You say that my ideas will send society back to barbarism. The great philosophers of the century did not think so; I am their disciple. Under the monarchy, I could get hold of the pernicious books of Mably, Helvetius, Diderot and Jean-Jacques."

The Church had always been the strongest bulwark of the monarchy. By holding the popular mind under the sway of the superstitions and prejudices of religion, it had kept alive the tradition of loyalty to the monarchy. There had been scepticism even at the time of the "most Christian King", as Louis XIV was called, but it was limited to high philosophical circles. Open attacks against the Church and religion began only under the Regency. That significant development was traced in detail by Rocquain in a book called *The Revolutionary Spirit Previous to the Revolution.* In 1751, "an anti-monarchical wind" was blowing over France. The influence of the ideas of Bayle, Voltaire, Montesquieu,

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[7] Ibid.

de la Mettrie, Helvetius, was already making itself felt. "If. the altar trembled, would the throne sand?" [8]

The Christian belief about the relation between God and man, shaken already in the seventeenth century, was completely overwhelmed in the earlier decades of the eighteenth. The attack was delivered from two sides: in addition to the atheism of the new philosophy, based on science, Christian, faith was opposed by the "natural religion" of the deists. Rousseau was the prophet of the new faith. It is true that the natural religion affected only a very small minority of "great lords, courtiers, princes and ministers, writers and men of learning, but .they were the men who controlled governments and influenced public opinion."[9]

The monarchy was sustained by the twin pillars of the nobility and the clergy. Both of them felt the impact of the new spirit of scientific naturalism and natural religion. "The new teaching had imprinted itself on the minds of these men of noble birth more deeply than on any others. Some had lost all religious belief, and admitted the fact: others, unconsciously, had lost all faith in monarchy: almost all had lost their faith in their own rights. The revolution, to them,, meant a rebellion against the despotism of kings and the fanaticism of priests."[10] Referring to the reaction of the lower clergy, the same critical historian writes: "The inferior clergy viewed their disreputable superiors with anger, jealousy and shame. For years these 'parish priests, sons of the people, and profound believers, had been imbibing the democratic spirit, because they too had become imbued to-some extent with the spirit of philosophy."[11]

In a small town, twenty-four out of the forty subscribers to the Encyclopedia were priests. That was a typical case.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Seignobos, *The History of the Rise of Modern Civilisation.*

[10] Madelin, *The French Revolution.*

[11] Ibid.

The spiritual foundation of the old order were irreparably undermined by the new philosophy, assisted by the natural religion which emasculated faith by depriving it of fanaticism.

The French philosophy of the eighteenth century "was sweeping in its rejection of authority, recognising none save that of reason, and exempting nothing from the criticism of reason. Ancient tradition, common consent, faith of the Church, scripture, were held to be worthless except in so far as conformed to, and vouched for by, reason. Specially Christian doctrines were treated by all the adherents of the new philosophy as absurd and pernicious superstitions; and although the principles of theism were accepted by a class of them as rationally warranted, a class not less numerous assailed all religious beliefs as illusions. The new philosophy was eminently rationalistic. It was not, however, calmly and temperately, but keenly and passionately, so."[12]

In that philosophical atmosphere, Rousseau's was the only discordant voice. His quarrel with Diderot and others created the belief that the so-called romantic movement was a revolt against the tyranny of reason. If romanticism is confused with the morbid sentimentalism of Rousseau, then it can be regarded as antithetical to reason. In so far as Rousseau was a rebel against reason, that is to say, against the scientific philosophy of the eighteenth century, he was the prophet not of the Great Revolution but of the post-revolutionary reaction, which placed a good deal of literary talent at the service of neo-Catholicism. Rousseau undoubtedly was an evangelist of the revolution; the credit of having made the largest single contribution to its emotional aspect belongs to him. But he played the very important Tole neither as a preacher of the natural religion (deism) nor as a mystic moralist, nor again as the dreaming naturalist

[12] Flint, *The History of the Philosophy of History.*

that he was. Popularisation of the doctrine of social contract was his contribution to the ideology of the revolution; and with him it was a *quasi* rationalist doctrine, deduced from the earlier social and political philosophies of Grotius, Puffendorf, Hobbes and Locke. There is some evidence to show that Rousseau learned also from Vico. His doctrine was only *quasi* rationalist because, in his characteristic manner, he disowned all indebtedness, and to prove his originality, he vehemently criticised theories which he appropriated, placing upon a plagiarism the strong imprint of his moving rhetoric and a superb literary style.

In any case, no significant leader of the revolution was inspired by Rousseau's sentimentdlism and his animus against civilisation, science and progress. Robespierre was the only outstanding exception; and there was little of sentimentality in his cold calculating craftiness. Only as a sanctimonious moralist, he was a disciple of Rousseau. All the rest of the outstanding leaders of the revolution were avowed rationalists. They had read Anaxagoras and Cicero no less avidly than Rousseau's works. Danton, the greatest personality produced by the revolution, was frankly not an admirer of Rousseau.

On the one side, practically all the men who had brought about the revolution, and actually led it from one triumph to another until it became a mad carnage claiming those very men for its first victims—Mirabeau, Brissot, Verghiaucl Lanjuinais, Rabaud, Barbaroux, Condorcet, the Rollands, to-name only the most outstanding—were saturated with the rationalist scientific spirit of the eighteenth century. Their attitude towards Rousseau's philosophy was represented by Voltaire, who, having read the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,* wrote to the author: "I have received, Sir, your new book against the human species, and I thank you for it. No one has ever been so witty as you are in trying to turn us into brutes; to read your book makes one long to go on

all fours. As, however, it is now some sixty years since I gave up the practice, I feel that it is unfortunately impossible for me to resume it."

On the other extreme, the Hebertists were fascinated neither by Rousseau's pious sentimentalism nor by his moral cant. They were attracted by his denunciation of private property. Those terrorists, the early harbingers of the cult of proletarian dictatorship, were instinctively captivated by the totalitarian implication of Rousseau's political theory Robespierre and the small circle of his personal associates, were the only orthodox adherents of Rousseau's metaphysics and moral philosophy. That is a very important fact, revealing the sinister significance of the concept of the collective ego which is the essence of Rousseau's political philosophy. As the personification of that imaginary absolute authority, Robespierre wanted to establish a personal dictatorship; and the other orthodox disciples of Rousseau were the open of Thermidore who set up the *Directoire* and helped NapMeon to assume dictatorial power.

Certain facts of Rousseau's life may create the impression that he stood outside the current of contemporary thought as the prophet of a philosophy, all of his own. He actually lived the earlier part of his life as an individual isolated from the intellectual atmosphere of the time. Subsequently, he came in contact with the fraternity of the *philosophes* who dominated the spiritual life of the eighteenth century. But the association lasted for a short period. Thereafter, he again played a lone hand; and yet, he came to be recognised as one of the inspirers of the revolution, if not its sole prophet. And his influence, like that of Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists, radiated beyond the frontiers of France. It inspired the belated Renaissance of Germany, and also the English romantic literary movement of the early nineteenth century. Whatever might have been the measure of Rousseau's European influence, it was not exactly revolu-

tionary. The post-revolutionary romantic movement was definitely reactionary, in social and political matters, although that does not detract from the excellence of its literary creation. Rousseau's European reputation was that of a master of style. Chateaubriand imitated his style, and set the standard of the nineteenth century romantic literature.

Rousseau can hardly be called a philosopher. He was a sentimentalist, a dreamer, a Utopian; and even as such he was not the product of an immaculate conception. To build an ideal society in imagination was the characteristic feature of the literature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The dream was to be realised in a regenerated monarchy. "This feeling as well as the discontent with which it was associated found their earliest and clearest expression in the political romances or Utopias which were written in France during the latter part of the seventeenth and the earlier part of the eighteenth century. Hope springing immortal in the human breast, a suffering people is naturally prophetic. It is in their times of sorest depression that nations usually indulge most in dreams of a better future, and that their imaginations produce most freely social ideals and Utopias. But all the ideals and Utopias which appeared in France in this period had a common character. They were only so many forms of the prophesy of a perfect commonwealth centering in, and depending on, a perfectly wise and irresistibly powerful paternal ruler."[13]

Rousseau belonged to that tradition; only the good king had no place in his Utopia. He was a revivalist nonetheless, asking mankind to turn back upon civilisation and return to the legendary Golden Age of Arcadia. He had not outgrown the faith in monarchy; his idea of democracy was cast in the mould of the City Republics of ancient Greece.

Nor was Rousseau an original thinker, either as a moralist

[13] Flint, *The History of the Philosophy of History.*

condemning private property as the root of all social evils, or as a preacher of natural religion. Abbe' Morelly was the prophet of the cult of collectivism; through Fourrier, he inspired the socialist movement of the nineteenth century. His book, *Code de la Nature,* was published ten years before the *Social Contract.* The sentiments expressed therein were so very radical, much more so than Rousseau's, that its authorship was for a long time ascribed to Diderot. Morelly fully accepted the view that man is a sentient physical organism> his object being the attaintment of pleasure. But the pursuit of happiness is not immoral, because human nature is good and innocent. "Morality implies no antagonism between the passions and duty, for the former are legitimate and sovereign, and would cause no harm if allowed free play. The great social problem is to find a situation in which the passions will be fully gratified, while it will be almost impossible for men to be tempted or depraved. It can only be solved through the elimination of avarice, the only vice in the we. Id, the universal pest of mankind, the slow fever or consumptive disease of society." The Utopia will be achieved when private property is abolished and wealth possessed collectively. Rousseau did not advocate a more revolutionary reconstruction of society.

Mably, also a catholic scholar, was another ideologist of the revolution. He was a deist, believing in a good God and moral law. He laid great emphasis on the place of morality in politics, and held that without religion morality was not possible. He also condemned private property as the cause of social inequalities. "If you follow the chain of your vices, you will find that the first link is fastened to the inequality of wealth." Mably anticipated the "scientific Socialism" of Marx by declaring that communal ownership of wealth and social equality prevailed at the dawn of history and they would be characteristic features of the ideal society of the future.

As a Utopian moralist, as a preacher of natural religion, in opposition to Christian orthodoxy, as a prophet of collectivism, Rousseau thus did not stand alone; he had predecessors as well as contemporaries. Together with them, he gave a purely emotional expression, to the spirit of the age, without himself imbibing it intellectually. In fateful periods of history, when mankind is called upon to perform acts of great heroism, be it for good or for evil, sentimental appeals to emotion, if they are couched in a stirring language, find more immediate and spectacular response. That is why, when the revolution broke out, Rousseau's influence appeared to be greater than that of the Enlightenment, though it was the philosophical revolution which created the consciousness of the need for a radical political and social reconstruction; and it was that new consciousness which responded to Rousseau's rhetorics. "Both were sons of their age, but Voltaire inherited its more general characteristics, and Rousseau, such as were less common. Hence the latter is often erroneously regarded as having been a man of greater independence and originality of thought, and less imbued with the spirit of the time. In reality, there was little substantial novelty in his teaching, and even when he opposed certain tendencies of the age, it was in the spirit of the age. Had he been more original, he would have been less influential."[14]

That is an excellent description of Rousseau's place in history and appreciation of the role he actually played. The spirit of the age was the belief that man could make his destiny. Rousseau's "noble savage" appealed to that faith as Prometheus Unbound. Therefore it was such a powerful appeal. For those who responded to the appeal, it was not a call of the wild; it was the tocsin for a heroic assault on the stagnant present, to blaze the trail into the darkness of

[14] Flint, *The History of the Philosophy of History.*

the future already illuminated by science. The revolution stimulated heroism and afforded chances of attaining greatness. Its activities were romantic. Its style and thought, however, were thoroughly classical. Its doctrines were derived from the philosophy of the eighteenth century. Its imagination was cast in the moulds of the classical antiquity and abstract reason. It argued on the authority of Plutarch and it established the worship of Reason.

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The recollection of the religious and civil wars which had devastated Germany, England and France up to the closing decades of the seventeenth century, created a distrust for the emotional attitude to life, which so very easily degenerated into strong passions and fanaticism. Completely exhausted by the Thirty Years War, Germany lay prostrate in a state of spiritual coma. In England, Locke frowned upon enthusiasm. Under Louis XIV, France came out of the dismal age of religious wars and entered the Age of Reason. It was long since she had experienced an unbroken period of order, security and apparent prosperity. From the point of view of the classes which constituted the social basis of the monarchy, it was a golden age; and the wisdom of Colbert shared by the king tried to broaden the social basis of the monarchy. The attempted policy was to establish a direct relation between the king and the people so as to undermine the position of the feudal aristocracy. Instead of being the leader of his nobles, the king posed as the benevolent protector of his people. Paternalism reinforced the position of the monarchy, and loyalty to the *status quo* became a general sentiment. The peasants also were relieved by the end of incessant wars, and, notwithstanding many grievances, became attached to a regime which had established peace and order. There was a general distrust for any innovation. The spirit of conservatism promoted classical learning. The idea of a law-governed Universe as revealed in the Newtonian cosmo-

logy, fitted into that atmosphere of classical conservatism. The world was destined to move smoothly according to the laws of nature, if only the orderly process was not disturbed by passions which should therefore be placed under the censorship of reason. Rationalism was identified with the defence of the *status quo.* But it was not rationalism, but classicism; the romantic movement was a revolt against that spirit of conservatism, which rationalised itself on the authority of classical learning. Therefore, historically, romanticism was the harbinger of the Great Revolution, and in that sense it was not antithetical to the rationalism of the scientific naturalist philosophy of the eighteenth century, which prepared the 'ground for the revolution. The two together constituted the revolt against the classicism of the age of Louis XIV—a revolt which culminated in the Great Revolution.[15]

The doctrine of Social Contract was Rousseau's main contribution to revolutionary thought; the doctrine itself is of rationalist tradition, having been postulated first by Grotius and PufTendorf; given a definite shape by Hobbes; and finally elaborated by Locke as the foundation of his political philosophy.[16] Montesquieu tried to establish the *a priori* doctrine empirically. Politically, Rousseau was a

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[13] "Romanticism is not a revolt from reason, an emotional fling, an escape from the real. It is a voyage of discovery with the whole man as master. His reason, inseparably linked to his will, guides his desire and conserves the fruits of his action. Considered abstractly and separately, Reason and Will keep pace with each other, now one leading by urging a want, now the other by stretching the use of a means; both together building up what in our sanguine moments we call civilisation. In moments of dejection, we feel and see that by the test of both reason and desire, civilisation falls short of its aim, and we are reminded of the romantic truth that in his greatness himself man is weak." (Jacques Barzon, *Romanticism and the Modern Ego.).*

[16] "Though the character and the original genius of Rousseau were stamped upon every feature of his time, the doctrines of the Social Contract are in all essentials borrowed from Locke and from Sydney, and where thev diverge from their models, diey fall speedily into absurdity." (Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe).*

disciple of Montesquieu; but having inherited from him the notion of social contract, Rousseau reverted to the earlier *a priori* conception. In the first draft of the *Social Contract,* he wrote: "There are a thousand ways of bringing men together; there is only one way of truly uniting them. Therefore, in this work, I give only one method for the formation of political societies, though, there are perhaps no two among the variety of associations that at present exist which have arisen in the same way and not a single one which was formed in the way I have indicated. But I am seeking the rights and basis of society, and am not quarreling about facts."[17] His doctrine is historically false,[18] although the idea of contract was very useful for the development of the theory of political constitutions. Not only in the eighteenth century, but even later, the idea of social contract was believed to be the foundation of the democratic political philosophy. But Rousseau himself revealed the dangerous implication of the idea, although for a long time it escaped the notice of political thinkers and constitutional theorists.

The revolutionaries of the eighteenth century enthusiastically hailed the doctrine of contract as the origin of civil society, because it provided a secular sanction for the new political regime, to replace the old order which drew its authority from the divine right of kings. It served a political purpose; that was the reason of Rousseau's popularity amongst the revolutionaries. "The *Social Contract* became the bible of most of the leaders in the French Revolution, but no doubt, as is the fate of bibles, it was not carefully read and was still less understood by many of its disciples. By its doctrine of the general will, it made

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[17] C. E. Vaughan, *The Political Writings of Rousseau.*

[18] The doctrine "is utterly unhistorical in character—a product of conjecture, abstraction and argumentation, all divorced from historical experience." (Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History).*

possible the mystic identification of a leader with his people, which has no need of confirmation by so mundane an apparatus as the ballot box. Its first fruit in practice was the reign of Robespierre; the dictatorships of Russia and Germany (specially the latter) are in part an outcome of Rousseau's teachings."[19]

The theory of social contract as elaborated by Rousseau proves that democracy is not possible. He conceived democracy only in the pattern of the city states of ancient Greece. In the world of the eighteenth century, when national States embraced large territories and vast populations, direct democracy was evidently not possible. So, Rousseau lamented: "Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men." Not only there were no gods in the civilised world, but the "noble savage", full of goodness and simplicity, was also a thing of the past. While scorching civilisation with the fire of righteous indignation, and passionately preaching the virtue of noble savagery, Rousseau nevertheless was very logical in developing a political philosophy, including a theory of the State. Since direct democracy was not possible in the civilised world, and the morally perverse civilised man would not return to the purity and simplicity of the primitive society, delegation of the sovereignty of the people to an "elective aristocracy" is inevitable; that is the only basis of an orderly society and stable government. That is how social contract operates in the civilised world.

An apparently democratic doctrine thus provides justification for the delegation of power and its concentration, which practice made an empty and deceptive formality of the principle of democracy. The social contract consists in "the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; as each gives himself

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[19] Bertrand Russell, *History oj Western Philosophy.*

absolutely, the conditions are the same for all." Equality will be achieved as the cost of liberty! Since absence of liberty is bondage, the equality established under the social contract will be an equality of bondage!

In Rousseau's theory of State not only is democracy a still-born child, but totalitarianism is postulated as the only practical principle. "If individuals retained certain rights, as there would be no common superior to decide between them and the public, each, being on one point his own judge, would ask to be so on all; the (pre-contractual) state of nature would thus continue, and the association would necessarily become inoperative or tyrannical." To justify absolute alienation of the individual, his vicarious sacrifice at the altar of the new god of the collective ego, Rousseau quietly discards his Utopian view of the state of nature in which man is simple and good, and adopt Hobbes' opinion that, when the primitive man lived in the state of nature, it was a war of all against all.

"Rousseau, like Hobbes, would organise society on the basis of a compact which makes the ruling will or sovereign authority indivisible, unlimited and unconditioned; only whereas Hobbes would place the absolute sovereignty in an individual will, Rousseau would assign it to the collective will. The ideal delineated in *Leviathan* is that of a monarchical despotism, and the ideal delineated in the *Social Contract* is that of a democratic despotism."[20] Robespierre tried to work out Rousseau's ideas; the consequence was degeneration of the Great Revolution into a reign of terror. Having seized dictatorial power, Robespierre disowned reason and introduced the worship of the Supreme Being.

A very significant fact of history is that, while the monarchist reaction would have nothing to do with Hobbes' monarchist political theory, Rousseau's idea went into the

[20] Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History.*

making of the metaphysical conception of the State, and through Fichte, became a patrimony of the anti-democratic crusaders of the twentieth century. Hobbes' picture of man in the state of nature is much nearer to reality than Rousseau's noble savage full of goodness and simplicity. One is a scientific hypothesis, defective to the extent that it was based upon very inadequate empirical knowledge,, .whereas the other, a sentimental imagination coloured by a fully warranted disgust with the corruption, frivolity and rigid conventionalism of the age of Louis XIV, which lingered in the upper strata of the society of the eighteenth century.

Rousseau's approach to social problems was never scientific; his was a purely subjective reaction. The experience of the earlier part of his life embittered him, and out of a morbid psychological state grew his pessimistic view of history, denial of progress and condemnation of civilisation as a curse.[21] Disgusted with the present, he could not be hopeful about the future, because of his censorious attitude towards the historical past. If there was no moral progress in the past, a better future could not follow from the immoral present.

Rousseau's picture of the future—of a romantic

[21] In his maturer years, Rousseau appeared to have thought differently. Describing the passage from an imaginary pre-social condition to the civil state, he wrote: "It produces a very remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. Then only, when the voice of duty takes the place of physical impulses and the right of appetite, does man, who so far had considered only himself, find that he is forced to act on different principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although in this state he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it for ever, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man." *(Social Contract).* But again Rousseau contradicted himself by setting up the doctrine of the general will as the basic principle of his political philosophy.

Leviathan—could not be very inspiring for those rationally pursuing the ideal of human freedom. He condemned mankind to "democratic despotism", because he believed that, given the immorality and perversity of the civilised man, he could not escape that fate; nothing better was possible. The noble savage—living blissfully in the simple state of nature was the consolation prize Rousseau awarded himself. His doctrine of social contract was reared upon a legend created by his imagination: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." The first part of this rhetorical flourish, with which Rousseau begins his treatise on political science, is simply not true;[22] at best it is a dogmatic assertion; and the second part implies that man is not capable of freedom. The two cancel each other, and civilised mankind is confronted with the choice between a return to the imaginary blissful state of nature and the deceptive Utopia of equality without liberty. The chains which bind man everywhere result from civilisation; man is responsible for , his own bondage, because civilisation is his own creation. The logical deduction from these rhetorics of Rousseau is that man can create only evil. What then happens to his original goodness? Rousseau's facile eloquence skips over such embarrassing questions.[23] But no critical student, while fully appreciating his merits, can grant him the credit of having founded the romantic movement which reinforced reason with creative imagination. Rousseau was simply irrational, and his morbid imagination was destructive, not creative. ' But nature takes her revenge; Rousseau's pers-

[22] "Man is not born free, but he becomes free in the measure in which he becomes man, as he becomes man in the measure in which he becomes free. And only as he becomes himself, can he learn, to know himself." (Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History).*

[23] Rousseau "was one of those writers who are eminently destitute of the judgment .that enables men without exaggeration to discriminate between truth and falsehood, and yet eminently endowed with that logical faculty which enables them to defend the opinions they have embraced. No one plunged more recklessly into paradox, or supported those paradoxes with more consummate skill." (Lecky, *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe).*

pective of democratic despotism logically follows from his inability to regard history as an evolutionary process.

Though the notion of a contract as the foundation of civil society had been a hypothesis of political science before it was dogmatically elaborated by Rousseau, he introduced in it an original concept of sovereignty—that of the General Will. It was no longer the imaginary contradiction between rationalism and freedom; the conflict between Rousseau and the philosophers of the eighteenth century was the old conflict between faith and reason, science and superstition.[24] It was on this perennial issue of the entire human history that Rousseau disagreed with the Encyclopedists. "That moral justice which seems to the philosophers a presumption against Providence, is to me a proof of its existence."[25] Notwithstanding his extravagant romanticism, Rousseau could never get out of the Calvinist tradition. His thoroughly unhistorical judgment of civilisation was a Calvinist prejudice: Human life is sinful, notwithstanding its goodness in the state of nature. Again it was the influence of Calvinist dogmatism which made him believe in the emergence of an ordered system of human society: Man is sinful, and left to himself can do only evil; but God uses man and nations for the unfolding of his will to create an orderly society. With the metaphysical concept of the General Will, Rousseau reintroduced teleology into

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[24] "Rousseau was the first to discover, beneath the varying forms human nature assumes, the deeply concealed essence of man and the hidden law in accordance with which Providence is justified by his observations. After Newton and Rousseau, the ways of God are justified—and Pope's thesis is henceforth true." (Kant, *Fragments).*

"The eighteenth century held to its faith in reason and science and saw in them 'des Menschen allerhoechste Kraft', man's supreme power. It was convinced that it would take only the complete development of man's understanding, only the cultivation of all his intellectual powers, to transform man spiritually and to produce a new and happier humanity. But Rousseau had broken widi this faith; to it he had opposed that passionate indictment against the arts and sciences contained in his first *Discourse."* (Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe).*

[23] Rousseau, *Entile.*

politics, even when he appeared to be discovering a secular sanction for it. The General Will is the instrument through which the divine will functions. Rousseau evidently was not a man of the Renaissance, which reached its climax in the scientific naturalism and secular culture of the eighteenth century. He belonged to the tradition of the Reformation.

Objectively, he represented a reactionary tendency, which manifested itself clearly in the post-revolutionary romanticism of the nineteenth century.

The doctrine of the General Will is the foundation of the metaphysical and also the organic conception of the State. Commenting approvingly on Rousseau's distinction 'between the General Will and the will of all, Hegel wrote: "Rousseau would have made a sounder contribution towards a theory of State if he had always kept this distinction in sight."[20] With Rousseau himself, the conception of State tended to be anthropomorphic. Already in the essay on political economy, written for the Encyclopedia, he personified the State—"as an articulate body, living, and similar to that of man." In the *Social Contract,* the State becomes "a moral and collective person." Monarchy eliminated, Rousseau's political theory thus clearly indicated the way towards "People's Tribunes" becoming dictators. The ghost of Louis XIV haunted the "prophet of democracy"; his "democratic despots" could also claim to be the vehicles of the divine will and declare: *L'Etat c'est moi.* Rousseau personified his theory of history; he certainly wanted progress on the reverse gear.

Even if the teleological justification of Rousseau's theory is discounted as his personal prejudice, the General Will becomes the fiction of a collective ego which is placed over and above the totality of the wills and desires of those living a contractual life. Kant brought out the totalitarian

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[26] Hegel, *Logic.*

implication of Rousseau's General Will. "The act through, which a people constitutes itself a State, or to speak more properly, the idea of such an act, in terms of which alone its legitimacy can be conceived, is the original contract by which all the people surrender their outward freedom in order to resume it at once as members of a common entity., that is, the people regarded as the State. Such a contract is by no means to be necessarily assumed to be a fact—indeed, it is not even possible as such; it is a mere idea of reason, which has however its undoubted reality: that is, it obligates every law-giver to promulgate his laws in such a way that they could have arisen from the united will of art entire people, and to regard every subject, in so far as he desires to be a citizen, as though he had joined in assenting, to such a will."[27]

General Will is not identical with the will of all, a fact on which Hegel laid special emphasis. Every member of the community naturally strives for his individual interest; but by the contract all are pledged to further the common interest. In practice, individual interests in a society of equals cancel each other; and there remains only the contractual obligation to further common interest. The sum total of individual wills discharging that obligation is the General Will. It is obviously a metaphysical concept which must find an appropriate physical medium of expression. The medium is the "elective aristocracy", or "democratic despotism". The former expression is used by Rousseau himself. Eventually, people's tribunes or leaders appear on the scene as incorporations of the General Will. Rousseau's democracy is realised in its complete destruction.

Though his political theory was dubious and dangerous, Rousseau's religious views were quite categorical, if not always very clear. In that respect also, he lacked consistency

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[27] Kant, *Metaphysical Basis of the Theory of Law.*

and stability. The natural religion of the deists may pass as poetry. But Rousseau's undying Calvinist conviction did not allow him to remain a tolerant deist who found the sanction for ethical and aesthetic values in a vaguely mystical faith. Rousseau actually expounded a science of God, which was subsequently acceptable to many modern protes-tant theologians. He maintained that the faith in God must be placed above all rational argumentation; it results from one's mystic experience and as such is the only foundation of ethics. "I believe in God as strongly as I believe in any other truth, because believing and not believing are the last things in the world that depend on me." In other words, one cannot help believing in God: to believe is human nature. As the expounder of a mystic theology, Rousseau struck at the very roots of rationalism.[28] But as a political theorist, he could not altogether dispense with reason, and it was in the latter capacity that he was hailed as a prophet of the Great Revolution. But for Rousseau himself, the two strands of his thought were integrated in one system, in which a mystic faith, morbid imagination and unrestrained passion prevailed. "He entertained no principles, either to influence heart or guide his understanding."[29] That is a very harsh judgment pronounced by one of the most brilliant exponents of romanticism. Burke also held that "to achieve its end politics should be adjusted not to human reason but to human nature, of which reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part." Nor did Carlyle, yet another romanticist, take kindly to Rousseau's romanticism. ^Because it was not romanticism, but sheer sentimentality. Trousseau certainly rejected the scientific naturalism of the

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[28] "The rejection of reason in favour of the heart was not an advance. In fact, no one thought of this device so long as reason appeared to be on the side of religious belief. In Rousseau's environment, reason as represented by Voltaire was opposed to religion. Therefore, away with reason!" Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy).*

[29] Burke.

eighteenth century, and for that reason must be credited rather as the prophet of reaction than of revolution. It was under his influence that the revolution degenerated into the short-lived, shockingly sanguinary, dictatorship of Robespierre. Rousseau's famous paradoxes for a long time confused opinion about him. His doctrines were interpreted in the most contradictory senses; his place in history was appraised very differently by different scholars. Even after his senti-mentalism and passionate devotion to the fashionable cult of "sensibility" had inspired post-revolutionary reaction, he was hailed as the pioneer of socialism. In him, "the poor have found a powerful pleader, the dumb millions a voice, democracy its refounder, and humanity in the eighteenth century its typical representative man, who gave vent to its inmost sentiment, troubles, aspirations and audacious spirit of revolt."[30] Having quoted this opinion, as "not inaccurate "[r] Robert Flint directly proceeds to declare: "But it is just as correct also to say that in him the poor have found a persuasive seducer, the dumb millions a voice which by the follies it uttered discredited what was reasonable in their claims, democracy a reconstructor so wise as to choose for its corner-stone the very falsehood on which despotism rests, and humanity in the eighteenth century the great literary exponent of those passions and errors which were the seeds of the guillotine, the germs of the infamies of the reign of terror."[31]

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[30] Graham, *Socialism New and Old.*

[31] Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History.*

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT REVOLUTION-II

THE first triumph of the revolution was scored when the clerical order decided to sit in the Assembly together with the Third Estate. Expansion of franchise introduced by Louis XVI on Necker's advice had increased the representation of the Third Estate (democracy) so as to command a majority in the Assembly. Previously, the aristocratic and clerical orders together constituted a permanent majority. The upsetting of that unequal relation of forces by a royal decree was itself a revolution. The two higher orders tried to block it by refusing to sit and vote together with the democratic majority. Thereupon, under the leadership of Mirabeau, the latter declared itself to be the sovereign legislative power, and to be in permanent session. A first-class revolutionary crisis was precipitated. The deadlock was broken when representatives of the lower clergy, which had come under the influence of the Enlightenment, broke away from their order to join the democratic camp. Three of their spokesmen appeared in the Assembly of the Third Estate with the declaration: "Preceded by the torch of Reason, and led by our love for the public will, and by the cry of our conscience, we come to join our fellow-citizens and our brothers." The first breach was immediately followed by a landslide. On the same day, by an overwhelming majority, the Chamber of the Clergy voted for union with the Third Estate, that is, to join the revolution.

As far as the monarchy was concerned, the revolution was complete. With the defection of the agents of God on earth, it could no longer claim to rule by divine right. The old regime forfeited its moral sanction. Reason at last triumphed over time-honoured faith. The devout army of

God, the traditional defenders of faith, accepted the lead of Reason. Revolution followed.

When Louis XVI consented to grant what practically amounted to universal franchise, he most probably relied upon the traditional monarchist sentiment of the people. According to the famous historian of the revolution, Aulard, it was a piece of Machiavellism; the purpose being to pack the Assembly with intellectually backward provincial deputies, who would follow the clergy; the men of the Enlightenment would be thus placed in a minority. That might well have been the case. But the defection of the clergy under the influence of the Enlightenment altered the relation of forces, and upset the Machiavellian scheme.

The news of the defection of the clerical order caused consternation in the Court. Drastic measures must be taken to stem the tide. All the three orders were summoned to a Royal Audience, where they were to sit apart as before.. Meanwhile, the rebellious orders were not allowed to enter the Assembly Hall. What were they to do? To obey or to march forward on the road of revolution? The decision rested with the majority of the provincial deputies. The test came when Mirabeau, yet an obscure man, cried: "To the Tennis Court!"—the Assembly should hold its session there, defying the Royal Order. There was a general assent by acclamation; the crowd of deputies followed the philosopher Bailly and the learned cleric Abbe Seiyes, and took the oath "never to separate until the Constitution had been established and set on a firm foundation." For all practical purposes, the monarchy was no more; it was overthrown by the unanimous vote of those on whose traditional loyalty it had counted. That was the consequence of the defection of the clergy. Having forfeited the claim to rule by divine right, the king lost the loyalty even of those who were his most Christian Subjects until the day before.

Two days later, forty-seven nobles led by the Duke of

Orleans came to join the deputies of the Third Estate, who had refused to leave the hall when the king had ordered the Assembly to disperse. The revolt was affecting the army. The king had no alternative. He issued the order that all the three estates should sit together in the National Assembly. The nobility as an order obeyed.

Meanwhile, events moved fast in Paris, culminating in the fall of the Bastille. That symbolic act, which cast its ominous shadow ahead, was committed in an atmosphere of the fever heat of emotional effervescence whipped up by the evangelists of the pseudo-romanticism of Jean-Jacques. A terrifying glimpse into its future hastened the completion of the revolution at Versailles. Representatives of the nobility in the Assembly demanded abolition of feudal privileges. The aristocracy as a class did not join the revolution; it capitulated.

During the first two years, the revolution was led by the so-called Girondins. A certain class of historians have depicted them as reformists and even reactionaries. Yet, the truth is that the fanatical followers of Rousseau killed a king after he had been deprived of all power, practically dethroned by the followers of the *philosophes* who would have preferred the revolution to develop in an orderly manner, because they were rationalists, but therefore no less revolutionaries. They were the original Jacobins, having been founders of the redoubtable Club. They were uncompromising republicans; they were not mystic sentimentalists or sanctimonious moralists, but pagans. Condorect was one of them, many being his followers. "In certain respects, they went further than Robespierre: like him, they were fanatical disciples of Rousseau, but they did not bow their heads like Jean-Jacques and his prophet before the Supreme Being; the greater portion of them were atheists, not deists."[1] In short,

[1] Madelin, *The French Revolution.*

the Girondins were democrats; therefore it was inevitable that the exponents of Rousseau's "elective aristocracy" came to *a.* clash with the original leaders of the revolution, those who stood loyally by the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment; in other words, incorporated the outcome of man's age-long struggle for freedom.

The election of the National Convention was the occasion for the final trial of strength between the adherents of the two ideas of revolution: the rationalists, but no less revolutionary, champions of Humanism and liberty; and the passionate preachers of equality, a deceptive ideal because it was Utopian. The real difference between the two contending forces can be judged from the appeal to "democratic voters" issued in behalf of the latter: "Men who are too much inclined to think they belong to a superior species, must not be elected." Thinking should be subordinated to feeling. Reason at a discount, emotions ran riot. The revolution came to be dominated by the spirit of Rousseau personified by Robespierre.

But the effect of the Enlightenment was too deep to be so easily extinguished. Emotionalism expressed itself in a demonstrative worship of Reason. Anti-religious propaganda spread throughout the country. Finally, the President of the Convention declared: "As the Supreme Being desire no worship other than the worship of Reason, that should in future be the national religion." Chaumette promptly obtained from the all-powerful Commune of Paris a resolution "to celebrate the triumph of Reason over the prejudices of eighteen centuries." Notre Dame should be transformed into the Temple of Reason. That fervour of rationalism, however, was degrading the sublime to the ridiculous. Danton frowned upon it, but his protest was rather a subtle hit to the opposite direction: to the enthusiasts who talk bad poetry instead of good sense. "I desire to hear nothing but reason in prose at the bar." Robespierre's reaction was different; his pur-

pose was to destroy a tendency, represented by the Hebertists, which was spreading throughout the country threatening to overwhelm the pious spirit of the Vicar of Savoy. He encouraged his trusted lieutenants—Collot, Couthon, Payan and others—to oppose the cult of Reason, openly denouncing it as "licentious orgy." The tone of their public pronouncement began to be frankly deists. But the time was not yet come for the prophet of Jean-Jacques to put on the robe of the High-Priest of a new religion presiding over the slaughter of revolutionaries.

When the National Convention assembled at the end of 1792, Robespierre, though elected from a Parisian constituency, defeating the Girondist Petion, was still far from being the leader of the Mountain, which had already become a live volcano belching forth fire and brimstone. Even then only a few followed him. Between 1789 and 1791, his cants had received little hearing in an Assembly dominated by towering personalities and intellectual giants who led the revolution. That humiliating memory was somewhat assuaged by his electoral triumph. But a more formidable rival was appearing on the scene. Paris also elected Danton to the Convention with a greater number of votes than cast for Robespierre. The Convention was clearly divided, the groupings being according to cultural tradition, intellectual conviction, temperament and political creed.

The revolution had taken place; what will be the shape of the future of the new regime? The Gironodists advocated a democratic republic in which human rights would be guaranteed. The Mountain was divided: Danton, in his heart of hearts, agreed with the Girondists; Robespierre also was extremist. As regards property, he did not yield to his opponents. But he was a fanatical believer in social contract; and therefore was not a democrat. He wanted to create a vehicle for the operation of the General Will, which would force everybody to be free. He relied upon the support of

Paris—then the boiling cauldron of unbridled emotion and romanticism of the Utopian variety. But the Commune of Paris was dominated by the Hebertists who had taken Rousseau's doctrine literally, and therefore could also be fanatical evangelists of the cult of Reason. They were not only terrorists, but communists as well. They stood for everything that the sanctimonious moralist Robespierre detested. They would follow Danton rather than Robespierre, if it came to a choice.

Between the two groups contending for the leadership of the triumphant revolution, sat the vast majority of deputies, an amorphous, irresolute, silent mass called the Plain or the Marsh.

The clash broke out fiercely during the trial of the king. The Mountain demanded summary execution, and their agitation with that blood-thirsty demand stirred up all the evil passions of the Parisian populace. To make political capital out of that emotional outburst, Robespierre and his associates accused the Girondists of monarchism! The men who had brought down the monarchy and compelled the demoralised nobility to surrender when Robespierre was still an unknown provincial lawyer! True to their humane culture and love of toleration, they saw no sense in taking the life of a helpless man, who out of sheer fright might have acted stupidly. Emotion clashed with intelligence; fanaticism with tolerance; demagogy with honest concern for democracy; in the last analysis, the claim of "elective aristocracy" to absolute power, with the faith in orderly democracy. The deputies of the Centre were terrorised by the madness of the Parisian populace. Anybody suspected of sympathy for the king would be killed. Madame Roland wrote in her diary: "Almost all our deputies now go about armed to the teeth. How delightful is the liberty of Paris!" Before long, she had to pay dearly for such frivolous sentiments, as an offering at the bloody altar of the delightful liberty.

The mass of deputies being so terrorised, the Girondists failed to move the Convention to be compassionate to the miserable man who was a king, but was no more. Thereupon, they proposed that the king's fate be referred to the judgment of the people—a humane desire and a perfectly democratic procedure. Robespierre was alarmed. The bloodthirsty Parisian populace could not terrorise the whole country. A correct judgment on the respective moral stamina of the parties was pronounced by La Revelliere—a partisan of Robespierre: "I must acknowledge that it involved more courage at that particular moment to absolve than to condemn." Each member was to mount the rostrum to vote, and his name must be called out. There were people in the gallery to prepare the black list. The moral courage to have risked the rage of fanaticism sealed the fate of the fathers of the revolution. The pathos of that dramatic moment drew the truth out of Robespierre; the master spoke through him, and the curtain of cant was lifted upon the shape of things to come. The would-be dictator declared: "Virtue has always been in a minority on earth."

The Reign of Terror began with the execution of twenty-two leading Girondists—"these men, young, four of them under thirty, and eight not yet forty, and full of talent, all of them to die, crushed out of life by the vilest hatred, without for one moment losing faith in freedom and the brotherhood of man."[2] Hebert, destined to be the next victim, invoked the General Will as sanction for that crime against civilised mankind: "Need there be so much ceremony about shortening the bodies of wretches already sentenced by the people?" The Convention was the place where individual wills cancelled one another; the General Will which survived that orgy of self-elimination, or rather resulted from it, had found its medium of expression in the Paris Commune,'

[2] Madelin, *The French Revolution.*

soon to be replaced by the Jacobin Club dominated by Robespierre.

On that tragic day, Madame Roland wrote in her diary: "It may be that pure victims are needed to call forth the reign of justice." Only a few days passed before she was arrested for "perverting the public mind." Having spent three months in prison, she was placed on trial, not to defend herself but to praise the men who had preceded her to the guillotine. She was however not allowed to speak; she was "eulogising crime." The flower of eighteenth century manhood, not only of France but of the entire civilised world, were criminals! How far the revolution had deviated from its ideas and ideals.

Now terror turned on the terrorists themselves. At the same time, it began to jusify its cruelties with moral cants and profession of piety. The spirit of the Vicar of Savoy had taken possession of the revolution. Chaumette and Herault de Sechelles went to the guillotine accused of atheism. Indicting them before the Convention, St. Just exclaimed in pious indignation: "They deny the immortality of the soul, which was the consolation of the dying Socrates." Hebert and his followers also died condemned of "bad morals", Those men had learned from Rousseau to lock upon property as the cause of all evils. They wanted its destruction. But the real evangelist of Rousseau's gospel was Robespierre who had grasped the master's philosophy and tried to act accordingly at the cost of the revolution. He had as much respect for property as faith in the virtue of minorities, and also in the Supreme Being, whose will he believed to be working through himself. He could not allow the virtue of the minority to be soiled by the communism as well as atheism of the men who had raised him to power, even if they also swore by the *Social Contract.*

By the autumn of 1793, the situation on the frontiers changed, and Danton began his campaign for clemency. He

realised that terror was destroying the revolution: the Revolutionary Tribunal he had set up was becoming an instrument of vindictiveness. What was devised as a temporary means was becoming a permanent institution. He did not see any reason why unnecessary terror should not be relaxed without the Committee losing its authority. Robespierre appeared to agree. But the temperament and character of the two clashed. Danton was full-blooded and frank; he believed in enjoying life and knew how to laugh. Robespierre was a Puritan, a prig, ascetic, humourless—a dry lawyer from a country town. Danton openly made fun of his perpetual talk of virtue, and outraged him by his virility and love of life. He had no personal ambition, while Robespierre was preparing for his dictatorship with cool calculation and warisome persistence. Danton was a typical democrat, and was careless about reputation.

Danton had been biding his time. He was not a worshipper of Rousseau. Combining reason and emotion, he was a true revolutionary. After the fall of the Girondists, he was the natural leader of the revolution. He must go if Robespierre was to be secure on the throne of the High-Priest of the cult of revolution turned into a blood-thirsty religion. St. Just gave expression to the fear which always haunts dictators: "If we do not guillotine him, we shall be guillotined ourselves." Danton was warned in time; he could appear before the Convention and sway it by his oratory, as he had done so very often previously. He could still save the revolution. But he was tired. On hearing of the plot against himself, he said: "I would rather be guillotined than guillotine others; and besides, I am sick of the human race." It was a voice of nobleness as well as of humanity. Even if all his acts of courage, devotion and statesmanship were not taken into account, only for those last' words Danton should be recognised as the greatest man of the revolution; and as such he fell. Having degenerated

into a blood-thirsty religion, preaching hypocrisy, the revolution no longer needed great and good men; the time had come for small and mean men to invoke an imaginary supernatural power to hide their smallness and talk of abstract goodness to guild their meanness.

Robespierre's famous *Notes* against Danton, on the basis of which St. Just prepared his Report to the Convention demanding Danton's head, was a pile of mean and malicious gossip. Through them all pierced the spleen of a small mind: careless sentences uttered by Danton in private conversations; innuendos about his well known love affairs, of eating and drinking and laughing; wrong motives were attributed to his tireless attempt to strike a compromise between the Gironde and the Montagne, in order to avoid bloodshed. Robespierre complained that Danton laughed at the word virtue, and that his claim to the virtue of his normal and healthy married life proved that he had no idea of morality and was not fit to talk of liberty. Robespierre's peevishness became almost insane hatred.

Robespierre himself proclaimed the greatness and goodness of the genuine revolutionary Danton when he argued his case for the destruction of the latter. "A man is guilty against the Republic when he takes pity on prisoners; he is guilty because he has no desire for virtue; he is guilty because he is opposed to terror." What a perverse notion of virtue! The hypocritical moralist directly proceeded to explain what he meant: "In time of peace, the springs of popular government are in virtue; but in times of revolution, they are both in virtue and in terror."

Robespierre could not kill Danton, if the latter wanted to resist. He was still the most powerful man, most magnetic personality. But he had realised his error of having taken the wrong side in the struggle between reason and romanticism, between the advocates of orderly progress and democratic freedom, and the romantic revolutionaries who

could be swayed by undisciplined emotion, and misled and misused by the cunning of ambitious fanatics. That was an initial tactical blunder, not an error of judgment; because, Danton never allowed emotions, though he was a man of strong and noble emotions, to overwhelm his intellect and influence his judgment. Nevertheless, the initial mistake pushed him to a direction he did not wish to go. He was mainly responsible for setting up the Revolutionary Tribunal —that merciless instrument of terror; within the year, he fell a victim himself, because he wanted to stop that madness. But it was too late; uncontrollable evil passions ran riot. Therefore he did not feel the urge to save himself, and perhaps save thereby the revolution, when the chilly hand of fate fell on his shoulders. He practically welcomed death as a relief.

In the evening, the fatal news reached him; he sat listless and brooding by the fireside until the morning, when the cruel hand of death seized him. The day before his trial, he was heard to mutter: "It was at this time of last year that I had the Revolutionary Tribunal set up; I pray God and men to forgive me." The cruellest irony of his fate was that the same Tribunal refused to hear him. At the last moment, the great human dynamo shook off his inertia and wanted to tell the truth before death silenced his powerful voice for ever. The "incorruptible" champion of "virtue and justice" was alarmed. Danton might still sway the Convention, and call upon the Parisian populace to rise once again in a mighty insurrection to hurl down the new tyrants who had replaced the old. For the sake of "virtue", the President of the Tribunal, that custodian of revolutionary justice, was ordered to put the gag on Danton, and give him the short shrift. But the Tribunal trembled when its founder was brought before it, accused of conspiracy against the revolution. Before it could recover from the shock and do as ordered, Danton had had his say: "Danton,

an aristocrat! France will not believe that story. I have sold myself! No money can buy a man like me! My name is associated with every revolutionary institution—the levy, the revolutionary army, the revolutionary committees, the Committee of Public Safety, the Revolutionary Tribunal." Then he uttered the great tragic truth: "Why, I have brought about my own death!"

It was not repentence; it was a warning for future revolutionaries. Man makes history; but his potentially unlimited creativeness is limited by the available material; revolutions take place of necessity, and sometimes they may even be inevitable; but their pattern cannot .be fitted into any preconceived plan. The artist creates out of imagination; but a revolutionary is not an artist to that extent. The attempt to impose the will of an individual or a group of individuals on history, that is to say, on the will of the rest, is bound to have evil or disastrous consequences. That was the lesson Danton, one of the greatest revolutionaries of history, had learned from experience. His last message for the future fighters for human freedom was to remember that lesson learned at a great cost.

When the gag was applied, the lion roared: "Do you take us for conspirators?" The hall resounded with a homeric laughter: "Write down that he laughed." The grand finale of the drama of a great life. Only free spirits, attached to nothing, not even to their own lives, can be great fighters for human freedom.

In *Danton's Death,* Buechner depicts Danton as the great romanticist of the French Revolution. "I condemn the dust of which I am made, this dust that speaks to you now. It can be persecuted. It can be brought to death. But I challenge the world to take from me that part of me which will live through the centuries and survive in the skies." (Danton, at his trial).

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The death of Danton was the signal for counter-revolution which took place under the banner of Rousseau's new religion preached by the political Pontif Robespierre. He established his "reign of virtue" protected by an intensified terror. "Apart from virtue, terror is baneful; but virtue is powerless without terror." That was the moral sanction of Robespierre's dictatorship. But he wanted to place virtue on a more abiding foundation. Terror could not last for ever. The worship of the Supreme Being as conceived by the Vicar of Savoy, and prescribed in the revolutionary bible, must be established to wipe out the memory of the cult of reason. But the Convention still harboured members who 3iad imbibed the spirit of the Enlightenment. So, Robespierre shad to proceed step by step.

Robespierre appeared to the majority of his fellow countrymen, and throughout Europe, as the ruler of France. By didactic speeches, frigid and unassailable persistency in public affairs, his unwearing parade of virtue, and his ceaseless claim to integrity, he succeeded in imposing upon multitudes a false idea of power. Finally, he decided that he might make himself in fact what others thought him to be a tyrant, the dictator.

He controlled the Convention and the Paris Commune; "he swayed the Jacobin Club by his oratory; Hanriot, the Commander of the Paris garrison, was his follower. The opposition was inside the all-powerful Committee of Public Safety. While all the members of the Committee except Le Bas were opposed to him, Robespierre relied upon the loyalty of St. Just who controlled the army. The popularity which he had so laboriously built up during five years was his armour—the legend of virtue, incorruptibility and lack of personal ambition.

When Robespierre admitted to himself the desire to be the all-powerful ruler, he felt the necessity of establishing himself as the High-Priest of a State religion. He resolved

that the worship of Reason must end. Letters came in daily hailing him as the new Messiah. The incident of Cecile Renault (caught with a knife in front of his residence) proved that Robespierre's life was under the protection of the Supreme Being. The first miracle of the new religion, thus happened.

Striking a Voltairean pose, so very incongruous to his austere piety, he declared: "If there had been no God, we should have been obliged to invent him." The cynicism of Voltaire's famous remark was hardly concealed. It was meant to expose the oppressive social significance of religion. But Robespierre spoke out of the sincerity of his heart. The respective values of cynicism and sincerity are to be judged by the underlying purpose. A few days lai^r, the prophet presumptive was more out-spoken. The issue was raised no longer hypothetically. "The idea of a Great Being who watches over oppressed innocence, and punishes triumphant crime, is a thoroughly popular one."

Meanwhile, the terror reached the climax, of course, in the service of virtue; the Convention was thoroughly purged, and the public tired out and cowed down. The auspicious moment had come. The Convention and the public were informed that the Committee of Public Safety had decided* to hold a "Festival of the Supreme Being." While making the announcement, Couthon said: "Pure souls felt recognition and adoration of a superior Intelligence to be a real need." Moving the adoption of the decree, the would-be Pontif delivered the famous oration on "The Relation Between Religious and Moral Ideas and Republican Principles". He concluded by proclaiming the necessity for the establishment of a deistic religion.

The revolution was undone. The king had gone; but the divine right to rule was resurrected. The Social Contract was a make-believe; the republican principles of Robespierre had a religious sanction; and he set up the dogma on the

authority of the bible of revolutionaries. Hume said that Rousseau "had only felt all his life"; he tried also to think, but allowed his ideas to be muddled by sentimentality and the morbid passion to be didactic. That is why he visualised a political institution reared upon the basis of social contract which nullified the basic hypothesis of his political science.

Robespierre was neither emotional nor sentimental; he was cool and calculating; nor was he much of a thinker; he was a schemer. A man of ordinary intelligence, he was full of cunning. He was a fanatic also; therefore, he was sincere. He fanatically believed himself to be a man of destiny—an instrument of the Supreme Being. The king was gone; Robespierre inherited the divine right to rule. He established not a democratic state, nor even Rousseau's elective aristocracy. Robespierre attained the zenith of his career as the head of a theocratic state. The Festival of the Supreme Being was celebrated with all religious rituals; a special hymn was written for the occasion. Robespierre presided on the ceremony, standing on the summit of a symbolic mountain, shrouded in a thick fume of incense, a hundred-thousand voice chanted the praise of the Lord. "For a moment, the Vicar of God fancied he was himself God."[3] He descended from his elevated seat to set fire to a gigantic statue of Atheism. Nearby, there was also the statue of Wisdom, who was to rise out of the ashes. But the fire that consumed Atheism also blackened the face of Wisdom. There was laughter all around. Always very sensitive to ridicule, Robespierre perceived hostility on all sides.

The "Law of Parairal," issued on June 10th, was his reply to the humiliation and bitter disillusionment of June 8th (Feast of the Supreme Being). The object was to clear from his path all who opposed or even criticised him. It was also his own death warrant, for it established complete

[3]Madelin, *The French Revolution.*

tyranny. He drafted the law with his own hand. It gave the Committee of Public Safety power to put to death any suspect without a trial—there would be no witness, no appeal, no counsel to defend.

After his fall, one of the Thermidoreans, Tallien,* remarked cynically: "He would have turned the Eternal out of his place to take it for himself." That remark of one of his intimate colleagues perhaps is the best summary of the biography of a man who sincerely believed in the revolutionary gospel of Rousseau, and pursued the false ideal with a fierce fanaticism. But no man, not even the greatest, can attempt to make history according to a set plan conceived in imagination, without courting disaster.

While warning future revolutionaries against the lure of "creative imagination", Danton knew that disaster awaited Robespierre also. "Vile Robespierre! The scaffold claims-you too. You will follow me." And he did, before the despotism of his "reign of virtue" was three months old. Robespierre wanted to use terror to make himself the unchallenged ruler of France. But he opposed it when it became an instrument in the hand of others also. Fouche wrote later: "He had but one step to take to become the master of the Revolution—but he had to have some thirty more heads." Robespierre needed the support of his only loyal friend against the growing hostility inside the Committee of Public Safety. He sent an urgent call to St. Just to return to Paris from the front. According to Barere, St. Just proposed in a meeting of the Committee that Robespierre be appointed dictator. However, St. Just tried to restore unity in the Committee, but Robespierre was sulky and often broke down in outbursts of self-pity.

The word virtue appears in the speeches of St. Just almost as often as in those of Robespierre. But the latter's virtue was a pale and negative thing—a theory. By virtue, St. Just meant a vigorous self-discipline, the practice of

austerity, to make a man worthy of liberty and give him a hunger for justice. He believed that a whole nation could base its daily life on virtue, provided that those who governed it set the example. Having no personal ambition, he allowed no risk to deter him, not any scruple to stand in his way. The dishonourable part he played in the overthrow and death of Danton and his friends is easily understood when it is realised that those men were demanding a less vigorous application of terror. Danton was more representative of the ordinary Frenchman than St. Just, who was a fanatic, and the fanatic has no use for the happy-go-lucky laughter of Danton.

The conflict between the Gironde and the Montagne, taught St. Just the lesson that democracy could .not be established without a compromise. But the lesson embittered him. He felt that sensible men would not accept that dream as a reality. How could a revolution be possible without the use of force? Montesquieu had taught that virtue was the moving principle of the Republic. But St. Just realised that she must walk the earth with a sword in hand.

The Gironde stood for a federal republic with local autonomy curbing the power at the centre. St. Just believed in central authority. His conviction was reinforced by mass desertion from the front in the spring of 1793. He realised the necessity of a strong centre—"one strong centralised will." The nation must recognise command; the whole country must be placed under martial law.

St. Just shared Rousseau's belief that in his primitive state man was good and simple, that the return to that state was possible. Wisely and justly governed, man will remain virtuous and happy. According to him, the first and most important principle of government was that the General Will of the people must be expressed by an elected and essentially deliberative assembly. The sovereignty of the people cannot

be delegated, nor even represented, because the will of the people is indivisible.

He argued that Condorcet had considered the General Will only in its intellectual aspect, and had therefore depraved it. He tried to rationalise it. The true will of the people must be conceived as a material thing, and not as a philosophical speculation—an expression of active interest.

Danton wanted that under the Republic the people should have a happy careless life, full of human weaknesses. St. Just advocated a life of austerity and frugality, and maintained that that would be the really happy life, because happiness meant a virtuous existence.

St. Just believed that he would read the Report in the presence of Danton. When the Committee issued the warrant of his arrest before the Report was read, St. Just was in a moral crisis. He saw that he had been used for a base purpose: He must choose between his own honour and the Republic. He chose the later, and justified the choice with the following argument: "Those who reproach us with our severity, would they prefer us to be unjust? It little matters what diverse vanities time has led to the scaffold, to the cemetry, to nothingness, if only liberty survives. What is a man? , What is even the greatest of us, when the permanent establishment of our Republic is in question?"

Robespierre's last act was one of iperfidy. In a carefully prepared speech to the Convention, he held other members of the Committee of Public Safety responsible for everything done under his order, against which there was a rising revulsion of feeling. He actually incited the Convention to overthrow the Committee of Public Safety. Pathetically, the all-powerful pleaded powerlessness. Owing to the perversity and selfishness of others, his closest associates, the "incorruptible" paragon of all virtue could neither do any good nor check evil. What is the remedy of the disease? There followed the peroration—perfidious, cowardly, treacherous.

"To punish the traitors, renew the composition of the Committee; constitute a united government under the Supreme authority of the Convention; crush all factions by the weight of the national authority, and raise the power of justice and liberty." How differently Danton would have spoken, had he cared to move the Convention!

Falsifying Robespierre's sophisticated cant, the Terror had disintegrated morals and driven virtue out of his kingdom. Spirit of revenge, fear, selfishness and other ignoble and base sentiments prevailed. Realising that thieves had fallen out amongst themselves, the terrorised, dejected and demoralised Convention suddenly felt its power. In the midst of confusion and consternation, Cambon rushed to the rostrum to pay his treacherous chief in his own coin. He cried: "Before I am dishonoured, I will speak to France; one man alone paralyses the will of the Convention; that man is Robespierre." The all-powerful despot of yesterday sneaked out of the uproarious Convention, a beaten and crestfallen man. He tried to rally the Jacobin Club in his support. But his star was declining rapidly. He must face the fate. The next day, he tried several times to address the Convention, with no success. Finally, when he did manage to make himself heard, it was not the authoritative voice of a dictator; it was the pathetic appeal of a fallen despot frantically trying to escape his doom. The appeal was addressed not to the revolutionary benches, but to the despised centre. "Men of purity, men of virtue! I appeal to you! Give me the leave to speak which these murderers refuse me." What a shameful end! Like an animal at bay, he ran hither and thither, appealing, supplicating, but enraged. Conflicting emotions stifled his once sonorous voice which had seduced so many for such a long time. Someone shouted: "The blood of Danton chokes thee!" The Convention voted for the arrest of the fallen despot; the gendarme took away a completely broken man with four of his

associates. Thus ended the career of the most faithful follower of Rousseau.

The old regime was overthrown easily without violence, thanks to the profound psychological revolution accomplished by the Enlightenment. Then, owing to accidental combination of circumstances, the leadership of the successful political and social revolution passed on to a different type of men. Intellectual immaturity and thoughtless enthusiasm brought them under the spell of a deceptive cult of revolution, which meant a reaction to the spirit of the eighteenth century, and therefore a negation of man's capacity to be free and virtuous. The revival of the worship of the Supreme Being meant voluntary relapse into spiritual slavery, the revolt against which was the motive of the entire history of modern civilisation. That is the significance of Rousseau's condemnation of civilisation, which was taken for a righteous indignation, a spiritual revolt against the corruption, immorality and cynicism of the age of Louis XIV. The noble savage was a fiction, but the romantic cult of revolution did plunge its devotees into savagery which was neither noble nor virtuous.

Louis Blanc, who believed to have inherited through Baboeuf Rousseau's spirit of revolt against private property, wrote: "It is a falsehood to say that the Terror saved France; but it may be affirmed that it crippled the revolution." It certainly did; and the general revulsion against it made it easy for Napoleon to establish his dictatorship.

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The French Revolution was not the experience of one particular country; it was not an event in the annals of one nation. The men of the revolution did not appeal to the past glory of France. They drew their inspiration from the classical antiquity. They burned all ancient charters and documents. Even cultural nationalism had no lure for them. Gothic cathedrals were looked upon as "monuments of barbarism and superstition", which were also to be destroyed.

The revolution marked a turning point in the history of Europe. Its repercussions were felt far beyond the frontiers of France. When the Republican armies defeated the interventionist forces at Valmy, Goethe wrote: "From here and now, a new epoch of world history begins." Therefore, the French Revolution has been called the Great Revolution. It is the logical outcome of the struggle for human freedom, which had been waged through several centuries.[4] As such, it ushered in a whole period during which time-honoured political institutions and traditional social relations were challenged all over Europe; in one country after another, absolute monarchies tumbled and the feudal social order was disrupted. "The movement which took the form of revolution in France was the movement common to all Europe, of the transformation of feudal institutions into those of the modern State."[5]

Those revolutionary events were brought about by the instrumentality of Napoleon's army. "Wherever in Europe the armies of revolutionary France appeared, the old patriarchal and feudal order was swept away. From Paris, the officers of Alexander I carried the message to Russia, where

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[4] "The eighteenth century led straight to the cataracts of revolution— and a revolution that was not merely the overthrow of a government, but the destruction of a whole ancient order of society, and the emergence of forces and ideas of social life whose existence had not been recognised before. Now a vast revolution, such as this, does not arise out of nothing: Its roots are deep in the past, and its slow subterranean growth can be traced, even though it be among the most obscure and least noticed events of preceding generations. This is manifestly true of the French Revolution, and it explains why the eighteenth century can be described as the 'seed time of modern Europe'. For, the French Revolution is the eighteenth century in action. The ideas which governed the revolution are the ideas evolved by the century, and the same ideas, expressed in the revolution, dominated the subsequent age. Thus, a chaotic melee, void of meaning in the world of politics, in the world of thought, the eighteenth century can justly be considered the great formative age of modern Europe. Its ideas guided the revolution, they are the ideas on which the nineteenth century has lived." (Alfred Cobben, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century.)*

[5] G. Lowes Dickinson, *Revolution and Reaction in Modern France.*

it profoundly influenced the rising young Russian intelligentzia."[6] The army led by Napoleon, however, was not his creation. It was created by the revolution; Napoleon himself was a part of that creation. Therefore, notwithstanding his personal predilections, his role in history was objectively revolutionary. He was neither an upstart nor an adventurer. As a sensitive as well as an ambitious young man, he had imbibed the spirit of the eighteenth century in his own way.

Voltairean by temperament and intellectual training, Napoleon was no admirer of Rousseau. When still a subordinate of the Directoire, he bluntly remarked: "Your Rousseau was a madman; it is he who has brought us to this pass." Yet, he put Rousseau's political doctrine into practice more successfully than Robespierre. He had evidently learned his political lesson from the *Social Contract*. The cardinal principle of the Napoleonic politics was the following: "A great nation must have a centre of unity. Twenty-five million of men cannot live in a republic. This is an unpolitical slogan." Young Bonaparte expressed this view already in 1789. The Napoleonic regime could be properly called a "democratic despotism". It could claim the mystic sanction of the General Will obtained through three successive plebiscites.

At the same time, Napoleon also succeeded in what Danton had failed, namely, to consolidate the new regime on the basis of the initial achievements of the revolution.[7] He established order out of chaos without in any way compromising the basic result of the revolution, which was to have overthrown the feudal social order. That fundamental aspect of the revolution had laid down the social basis of the military power which France attained under Napoleon.

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[6] J. P. Mayer, *Political Thought in France from Sieyes to Sorel*.

[7] "We have finished the romance of the revolution; it is time to begin its history,—to note only what is real and possible in the application of its principles, and to ignore all that is merely speculative and hypothetical." (Napoleon).

The revolution gave land to the peasantry. And the French peasantry, in return for the gift, supplied Napoleon with soldiers to conquer Europe and the conquest meant spread of the revolution—overthrow of monarchist absolutism and destruction of feudalism in the conquered countries.

"He had no desire to restore the Bourbons and feudalism; on the contrary, the destruction of the *ancien regime* was the presupposition of all his work. It was that which he conceived to be the essential work of the revolution. He first realised in fact what the revolution had proclaimed in theory: that public burdens should fall upon all, and public offices be open to all. He took no count of birth or political antecedents; talent and loyalty to himself were his sole criterion of merit."[8]

The philosophers who had inspired the revolution thought in terms of humanity as a whole. When Madame Roland declared that she had a "cosmopolitan soul", she spoke for all of them. During the discussion of the "Declaration of Rights", one deputy exclaimed: "We desire to make a declaration for all men, for all time, for every country, that will be an example to the whole world." That was the spirit of the revolution. The ideal was attained by the revolutionary army of Napoleon.

"Bonaparte was a child of the revolution, equally in the sense that, like so many other brilliant men, he was enabled by reason of that great social convulsion to come to the forefront of affairs, as also because his youthful mind had been formed by the literature of criticism and revolt which had heralded the storm. The amazing preponderance over Europe which France obtained (under Napoleon) is not only to be explained by the genius of its leader, but is also due to-the fact that by the destruction of privilege the best talent of the highly civilised countries of the West was available

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[8] G. Lowes Dickinson, *Revolution and Reaction in Modern France-*.

for his service. Men of science were given (ministerial) portfolios. The Council of State was the most efficient body of experts which Europe had yet seen. For the most part, the Marshals of the victorious army had risen by merit from the ranks."[9]

The rationalist spirit of Danton survived Robespierre's fanaticism; science got the better of sentimentality; reason reasserted itself in the atmosphere of romantic extravagance. Having thus recovered from the crisis in its earlier stages, the revolution crossed the frontiers of France to pull down the old order in other countries. Napoleonism was the revolution in its expansionist phase. It rose as reaction to the endeavour of the forces of international conservatism to crush the revolution in its infancy. The military phase of the revolution did not begin with the rise of Napoleonism. It began when, confronted with the danger of foreign intervention, Danton advocated the "*levee en masse*" of the "nation at arms". On that new broad social basis, Carnot organised the army of the revolution which, having first defended revolutionary France, subsequently, under Napoleon's command, carried to other European countries the message of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Napoleon's new strategy and tactics were determined by the structures and composition of the army he commanded. The old order in one country after another collapsed when the professional soldiery of feudal monarchs proved to be utterly incapable of resisting the onslaught of the new type of army born out of the revolution. The *levee en masse* mobilised the flower of French manhood for the defence of the revolution. Most of the famous Marshals of Napoleon began their meteoric military career as common soldiers in those early days of revolutionary enthusiasm. One of them, Victor, originally a drummer, exclaimed when he became one of Napoleon's Marshals: "Oh, splendid out-

[9] Fisher, *History of Europe.*

burst of 1791! Would that I could extol thee worthily," Marmont, another of them corroborated: "We lived in an atmosphere of light; I feel its heat and power at fifty-five, just as I felt it the first day."

The army which swept away the old order practically throughout Europe was commanded by Generals who incorporated the heroic and liberating tradition of the revolution —the victors of the battles of Champagne, Lorraine, Belgium, Valmy, Jemmappes; and it was manned by the French peasantry, which had risen in revolt successfully against feudalism. It was an army of revolution in every sense; and its leader, Napoleon, was a standard-bearer of the revolution; no matter whatever might have been his personal motive. "The army had become far more republican than the nation in general. It was in the throes of a genuine paroxism of civic feeling. Never was there such an exhibition of mystic faith: their faith saved them. They (the Generals of the revolutionary army) put the Marseillaise into action."[10]

Militarily, the revolution had triumphed even before the rise of Napoleon. After the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror, followers of Danton came to the helm of affairs, and the Girondins reappeared in public life. The sitution at home eased, if not yet quite restored to normalcy, the Directoire could turn its undivided attention towards the frontiers. The "Organiser of Victory", Carnot, was still at the head of the Ministry of Defence. Overrun by the revolutionary army, Holland became the Republic of Batavia. Belgium, together with all the territories as far as the Rhine, was incorporated in the French Republic. The frontier was pushed forward similarly towards Italy. Defeated repeatedly on the battle-fields by the revolutionary army, Prussia, Spain and Tuscany withdrew from the anti-revolutionary alliance. By 1795, the revolution had reached the

[10] Madelin, *The French Revolution*.

stage of the final showdown; for the mastery of Europe, it must break the resistance of "the two Powers in the world which represented in their strongest and most pernicious form the counter-revolutionary spirit—Protestant Britain and Catholic Austria."[11] The former being firmly entrenched behind the waves, ruled by her Navy, the strategy of the revolutionary war was first to acquire the mastery of the continent by reducing the Power of Austria. Italy was the most vulnerable point in her armour; and was therefore, together with other reasons, chosen as the first object of the revolutionary offensive. Napoleon was in command of the operation. His days had come, and he rose up to the occasion. "The young men who followed Bonaparte across the mountains into Italy still believed that France had a liberating message to give to the world."[15] Their object was not to conquer a foreign country, but to launch the Italian people on the new way of life, which had been blazed by the revolution. Napoleon's Proclamation to the Italian People was couched in the corresponding tone. "Peoples of Italy! The French Army comes to break your chains; the French people is the friend of all peoples; meet us with confidence, Your property, your religion and your usages will be respected. We have no quarrel save with the tyrants who enslave you." The spectacular success of the Italian campaign turned the head of young Napoleon. He was fired with the ambition of himself becoming the ruler of Europe by skilfully wielding an instrument created by the revolution. Nevertheless, the French Army was hailed as the liberator, and actually brought about a political change and precipitated a social upheaval wherever it went. "In the history of the Italian people, the first campaign of Bonaparte marks the beginning of that resurgence of national feeling which is

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[11] Fisher, *The History of Europe, u** Ibid.

known as the *Risorgimento.* Though he was severe, he seemed to come as a liberator, bringing with him the breath of a new freedom and wide-ranging prospects of Italian power. Much was forgiven to the young General who broke the Austrian stanglehold on the Italian people, and invited them to work the institutions of a modern State. The Italian *literati* praised him to the skies; the best Lombards crowded to his Court; and the Cisalpine Republic, though resting on French bayonets; acted for many years as a state-craft in a lane where the tradition of public duty had long been atrophied by foreign rule."[13]

Even more revolutionary were the effects of Napoleon's conquests of Germany. Until then, there had been no Germany; Napoleon brought her into existence. She rose out of the fierce clash between the ideas of the revolution heralding a new social order and the mediaevalism incorporated by the 360 feudal principalities held together precariously by their allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire, reduced to a fiction by that time. All historians agree that under the impact: of the French Revolution, transmitted through Napoleon's army,Germany emerged from the long lingering twilight of medievalism, and came under the influence of modern civilisation. All the great leaders of the belated GermanRenaissance were admirers of the French Revolution. Goethe, for example, welcomed the genius and saluted the conquests of Napoleon. It was during the period of subjugation by Napoleon's army that Germany reached the summit of her literary glory and spiritual in-

[13] Fisher, *Ihe History of Europe,*

fluence, and made the greatest contribution to modern European culture. "It is a remarkable fact that the zenith of German literature belongs to an age of political impotence and division, when Goethe and Schiller were friends at Weimar, and German patriotism stood at its lowest ebb. The defeat of the French Emperor at the battle of Leipzig came to him (Goethe) as a disappointment, and the greatest lyric poet of Germany makes no contribution to the literature of the War of Liberation." [14]

While intellectual activity and modern culture thrived in the Rhine Federation, Prussia remained the home of feudal reaction, which resisted the powerful impact of the revolutionary ideas. It combatted Napoleon and his army not merely as foreign invaders, but as the standard-bearer of rationalism, liberalism and the rule of law. But even after Waterloo, Germany could not throw off the influence of revolution. Under that influence, Stein introduced his agrarian reform in Prussia, The French conqueror had emancipated the peasantry in adjacent Poland and Westphalia. Prussia could not be immune from the repercussion of that revolutionary event. The so-called War of Liberation represented a conflict between nationalism promoted by Prussia and the cosmopolitan spirit of the great European revolution. Finally, the latter triumphed, though for a short while, in the revolution of 1 848.

Nor could England keep herself altogether out of the reach of the influence of the revolution. Subversive, social doctrines had crossed the English

14 Fisher, *The History of Europe,*

Channel before Napoleon's abortive attempt to do so. They inspired a popular movement which swept over the island; though the Charrist movement fell short of a revolution, the passage of the first Reforms Act was compelled and the ground for the second was prepared. In spite of Burke, political events in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century moved under the shadow of the revolution stalking over the cotinent; and the intellectual life consisted in efforts to concretise the principles of the philosophy of the revolution so as to render them applicable in practice. Literature, particularly poetry, was influenced by the romanticism of Rousseau, while scientific naturalism predominated philosophy. In short, Great Revolution was felt in every walk of life in Britain also.

The Code Napoleon was the most abiding positive achievement of the revolution. It provided the secular State with a solid legal foundation. The administration of civil society no longer needed the sanction of the will of a despotic monarch nor of the Devine Providence. The pioneering efforts of a whole succession of philosophical jurists ever since the fifteenth century at last yielded a rich harvest. Napoleon completed the revolution not only by destroying the old feudal order throughout Europe; his much greater achievement was to provide secular sanction to a civil order based upon social equality and religious tolerance. For the first time in history, social life was made independent of priestly tutelage. The philosophy of human freedom developed over

a period of centuries was at last given a shape capable of practical application, After several centuries of struggle, the revolt of man culminated in the triumph of the Great Revolution. Therefore Michelet called it the Second Renaissance.